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VAN MORRISON

NEW ALBUM
'HARD NOSE THE HIGHWAY'



M. KENDREE SPRING

A Short History of a Previously Un documented Band

"Sitting on McKenzie River,
Listening to McKendree Spring,
They're so goddamned good...."

That's what the Pure Prairie League said in their song 'You're Between Me', and I know exactly what they mean, and I hope when you've read this that you'll have a better idea of the origins and influences of the group—maybe enough to make you buy one of their records, which is not a thing you're likely to regret subsequently. I was first captivated by McKendree Spring when John Peel, who, I hope you know, is essential listening at all times, played a track from their third LP on 'Top Gear' some time ago. He said something to the effect that anyone who enjoyed the sound of the electric violin should listen carefully, and I, being somewhat of a fan of Sugarcane Harris and David LaFlamme, did just that. Since that day, folks, I haven't looked back. An obvious step, then, to talk to them while they were here recently. Unfortunately, the band were staying at a hotel which was to my eyes somewhat ghastly, belying its fairly promising position in the depths of civilised Kensington because it was situated directly in proximity to the rather noisy District Line, and at certain times, I can't quite hear what we were saying on the tape. I hope you'll forgive the omission of anything you may have wanted to know, but equally, there should be some information of interest. All right? Off we go.

Beginnings

[Martin Slutsky speaking] "Fran [McKendree] and I were going to the same school, Adirondack Community College near Lake George, NY, and I heard Fran play, and he blew my mind. How one person could put out so much sound, and be so dynamic and good-looking on stage, because he really does look impressive on stage. I thought 'Hey, this is a chance for me to get in,' because up until then, I'd just been playing folk guitar, and I was kind of a folk singer on my own, but getting into playing lead guitar. The place where we actually got together was Glensfalls, NY, in the country, not near the city, up in the woods. We were going to a school where Michael's [Dreyfuss] wife was a

history teacher, Western Civ., and that kind of thing, and an excellent one, very nice legs. She invited us up to a party at their little chateau up in the woods, and we said we would go, because she was that kind of a teacher who was groovy. So we went up and played, and at that time, one of our big songs was 'Suzanne' by Leonard Cohen, so Fran and I started playing it. Then, out of nowhere, this bearded freak, that happened to be her husband, came out of the woodwork, and started playing beautiful, beautiful violin—it was classical, coming directly from classical music, but fitting in with what we played, and it clicked. We decided to form a band, to see what would happen, and that's how it really started. Just with the three of us, and then we got our first bass player. At the very beginning, before we met Michael, Fran and I listened to a lot of Arlo Guthrie's first album, not the 'Alice's Restaurant' side, but the other one, with 'Highway In The Wind'. It was really beautiful and we constantly listened as well to Buffalo Springfield and Tom Rush's 'Circle Game'. Those three albums were kind of folk orientated, but with some electric guitar, and were starting to get into what we've developed into now. Those were, I think, our early main influences, even before Michael started with us. We were, I suppose, something like a Simon and Garfunkel duo, because both Fran and I played acoustic guitar. But this was a very brief period of maybe three to four months, because although we were doing music as a side-line to school, we all knew that we didn't want to go to school anymore, and we really wanted to make a go of music. So we were serious about it—serious enough to rehearse our arses off."

Come in, Michael Dreyfuss

Michael Dreyfuss, who plays all the freakier instruments with McKendree Spring, is in fact a fully qualified medical doctor, and has a B.A. in Physics. Why did he get into music?

"I'm pretty straight actually, but I got several ulcers. I was into medicine, research on limb regeneration, at the school from which I graduated, Western Reserve University, in the anatomy department, and I was there for about

five years. I liked the work very much, but there was so much administrative hassle, writing out grant applications, meetings every week, and departmental in-fighting bullshit, that I began also to hate teaching, because teaching in medical school is very like regurgitating a book, especially anatomy and so forth, drawing the same pictures as are in the book. I had an ulcer history of about ten years, and pretty soon it just closed up completely, and I had to have surgery. I had wanted to write for as much of my life as I can remember, so finally my wife and I said 'What the hell? Let's go up to our place.' We had bought an old ramshackle house up in New York State, and we had it fixed up, and moved in there. It was a heavy move, but a wonderful relief. All our friends said that we would never survive one winter up there—it was very funny because both Chris [Bishop] and Marty are from that area, yet my father told me that people don't live there in the winter, it's all snow ploughs and such-like....But that's how I met Fran and Marty."

But how did that qualify you to play the violin?

"I started when I was five and a half, under parental instruction. What kept me going during the tough years was that my father was in World War II, overseas in France, and kept writing me these letters from the front. You know—'You can do anything you want with your life, it's just that we spent a thousand dollars on violin lessons. I'm out here fighting for your freedom, but you can quit—I don't care if I never hear you play when I come home.' The guilt was just green, flowing through the ink, bloodstained letters. However, I'm really glad he did it now. But that's not really where I learned to play, because I think I learnt to play the fiddle after I graduated from medical school, after my formal training and all the bullshit was over. I started playing chamber music with people who are now really heavy in the States, first chairs, major artists. They were friends of mine in Cleveland at the time, and they would take it out on me if I wanted to play with them. If I wanted to come back next week, and have these formal sessions, I had to shape up and learn the literature, which was worth it."

Bass Player Blues

For a band which has made four albums, McKendree Spring appear to have had some problems with filling their bass player's position. Although now the

current incumbent, Chris Bishop, seems likely to stay with them, he will in fact be creating a record in more ways than one if he appears on both the record which the band have been making recently at the Manor, and the next one, for none of his predecessors have been the fully accredited bassman for longer than one album. There certainly appears to have been a certain turbulence. Martin Slutsky explains.

"Larry Tucker started with us at the very beginning, going to Adirondack Community College where Fran and I were at school. He was a friend of ours who had played bass in some itinerant rock 'n' roll bands, but none that anyone anywhere has ever heard of, but he was a really nice guy, so we started rehearsing with him. At the time, he and I didn't really know how to play very well, and we learnt together, he and I progressed together. Unfortunately, he learnt how to play lead guitar along with me."

Michael Dreyfuss chips in:

"Actually, Larry had a head start on Martin, because he had played electric bass before Marty had ever played electric guitar. It was incredible, the speed with which Larry was left behind, because Marty just became one of the fine guitar players. The sounds he gets are most unique."

Martin Slutsky again.

"We finally sat down with him—Fran actually did the talking, but we were all there. We really loved him, and I still do, because he was a beautiful cat, but he wasn't into bass playing. His head was more into the technology of equipment, and he'd do everything but practise. He'd buy amps, he'd buy guitars—at one time, he built his own set up, and at another time, he liked the sound of a small Ampeg B15, that they use in the studios. It's got a good sound, but it's very small, and it's not very loud. However Larry liked it, so he went out and bought five of them, and stacked five of these little amps up on stage. He'd get ideas like that, that he'd blow all his money on. Unfortunately, he wouldn't get down to practising and playing, and actually getting his chops and his notes together, but before we fired him, we gave him a strong warning, and suggested that he take lessons. Instead of taking lessons, he went and enrolled in the Berkeley School of Music, all the books, but he never got down to the honking and the whipping of it, and the laying down the groove of playing the bass. Another thing that bothered me playing with him was that on some nights,

Bass player number three was one Fred Holman. Martin Slutsky tells all.

"Fred used to play with Jerry Jeff Walker as his bass player, and then he worked with a club band around New York. This wasn't Circus Maximus, and Fred never played on Jerry Jeff's albums, as far as I know. He just played on his road band. He sang high, and we were looking for somebody who could do that, who we could also get along with, and after the first interview with him, we thought he would be OK, and we hired him. The reason we got to know him is because Jerry Jeff Walker is managed by the same person as us, so it was all like a family thing. We all knew who he was, and he knew who we were. But it turned out that after we had been on the road with him for about a year, he had a lot of things going with his old lady, and he didn't like being away from her at all. He knew that he had paid his



Martin Slutsky

dues playing bars and clubs all through the years, and was not prepared to pay any more dues. He thought that when he joined McKendree Spring he was a star, and that tapping wood, you know, the working part, not necessarily the working part, but the dues paying and the getting ripped off part, which believe me happens constantly, was over. It wasn't. Actually the catalyst was our last tour here in England, when we were with an agency who did not appear to have our best interests at heart. The tour was just gross, and we were playing the shittiest bars and clubs, and funky gigs. We were getting ripped off, losing money badly, and one night, Fred came up and said "Look, I'm going home tomorrow". In the meantime, we had three more of the heaviest gigs left. We had just done 'The Old Grey Whistle Test', and we were stars—you know, for those three days maybe, because everyone had seen us, and then he said "Look, I'm going home, I'm not doing any more gigs, I don't care what you guys say." So we sat down with him, and worked it through that he would finish the tour with us, but after much duress, believe me. I dug what he was saying, because I knew we were paying dues up the arse, and I was pissed off, but I had made so much of a time and money investment over the last five years in this band, and I wasn't about to blow an English thing. That sort of thing has been happening to me for five years, and I can handle it, but he wasn't ready for it, and I could dig completely why he wanted to split, but towards the end, he got to be a bit of an arsehole. We were chartering flights, flying him around the United States, any place he wanted to go, just so that he'd do the gigs. He was getting really bad, but just when I was getting ready to get rid of him and take anybody to fill in the bass until we got somebody we really wanted, we did this one big gig at the Academy of Music in New York, with Fleetwood Mac and Heckstall-Smith, and it was a really beautiful night. Everyone was buddies and friends, the perfect rock gig, if you could imagine it, but that was our last night with Fred. Then we went on vacation for a while, and started holding auditions again for our next bass player.

"It started off with just Fran and I, because Michael had chicken pox, and was laid up sick as a dog, because when an old geezer like him gets chicken pox, it's a bitch. But Fran and I went down to this little studio in Ithica, where we live, up in the country, and had auditions. We had about eight or nine bass players coming in, one of the guys being from Rhinoceros, whose name was Peter Hodgson. [Note: he was a Canadian, who played on 'Satin Chickens' and 'Better Times Are Coming', the last two of Rhinoceros's three albums on Elektra, which are probably deleted, but interesting if you should see them cheap.] However, he wasn't satisfactory, and we were holding these auditions, doing three bass players a day, just sitting around

jamming and getting stoned, playing with them. It was a bummer again. There were none that were really flipping us out; some that we could have got by with, but none that we really wanted. Then I heard about this guy Chris Bishop, from a friend of mine, Paul Muse, who was from Glensfalls in Lake George, where we originally got together—we have since moved to Ithica, NY, where Cornell University is. Paul Muse, who is one of my main guitar instructors, teachers and gurus in that direction, said "Hey, this guy Chris Bishop is a bitch, man. I played with him, and I want him in my band, but he doesn't seem to be into it. If you're looking for a bass player, you'd better give him a call." I said I wasn't sure, because he was so young, and I remembered when he was playing in high school. But Paul said I had better listen to Chris, because he'd changed, he was good, he was better than Paul Muse himself. So I met Chris at a party at Paul's house, and asked him if he wanted to come out for a jam, an audition. He said "Yeah, I'll come out." He wasn't freaking out about it, but he agreed to come round to give it a whirl, and he came around, and that night, it was about our third or fourth bass player of the day. He came into the studio, and immediately sat down and started playing piano, boogie-woogieing on the piano, and had Fran playing bass and me playing drums. Talk about an audition! We were auditioning for him! At that time Chris was working solid with Mustang, who is a guitar player and songwriter who has made one single, although he hasn't had a hit yet. Paul Muse, by the way, was in a band called the Marcabes, and Chris was also in it, while I humped equipment for them at one time.

"Chris freaked us out at the audition—it wasn't just a bass player we were getting, but somebody who really was a gas to jam with, and we really got off jamming with him, and he played stuff that we didn't know, and that we would dig learning, in fields that we wanted to get into. At that time, we were beginning to stagnate a little bit, having played the same things, and not having had any really big hits. We needed a new vital force, which is what I think Chris has provided for us."

Joining Up With A Record Company
McKendree Spring are signed to MCA.
Martin Slutsky continues.

"It's called MCA now, but it used to be Decca. Our management had a deal with MCA, three groups a year for publishing, management and recording, although they never totally fulfilled the contract, and never got the second group. We were just thrilled to be signed to any record company, although at the time, it wasn't a good record company, but in the last year, it has become strong in the States. Of course, we've been through three Presidents of the Company in the States."

Michael Dreyfuss with more on MCA.

"In fact, we have had some political problems, with actual suppression of material, during the last Presidential campaign. We had a song called 'God Bless The Conspiracy' on our third album ['McKendree Spring 3.] and we had it out as a single, a very nicely edited single, three and a half minutes long. They claimed it was a copyright hassle with Irving Berlin, or would have been. Even though it's on the LP, it has never been cleared with Irving Berlin, who wrote 'God Bless America' in 1918, then put it in a trunk and boarded it up until the 1930s, when he gave it to Kate Smith when she wanted a patriotic song. All the royalty money from 'God Bless America' goes to the Girl Scouts of America. It was a very complicated business, and I can see there would have been a hassle, but not an insurmountable one. Obviously, it's almost a piece of Americana, and there's very few people who even know he wrote it. I didn't know, and it came as a surprise to me. The inside word was, which we got through a since-released vice-president, that MCA corporate structure in California was one of the leading supporters of 'C.R.E.E.P.', the Committee to Re-elect the President, or at least, leading supporters of the President for re-election—I don't know about a committee. They were simply outraged by that single. It had beautiful packaging and was shipped, and was in the hands of disc jockeys and reviewers everywhere, and one review came through from one of those trade publications for radio, a very inside thing. It was Bill Gavin of the 'Gavin Report', who gave it a personal pick, and did a whole thing about America and what it's like and so on. He was the only guy that did it, maybe out of courage, and he refused to return or recall anything.

Unfortunately, everyone else just dropped the whole thing like hot potatoes. It was originally a twenty minute track tape, edited down to nine minutes for the album, and three and a half minutes for the single."

A Bit Of Silliness

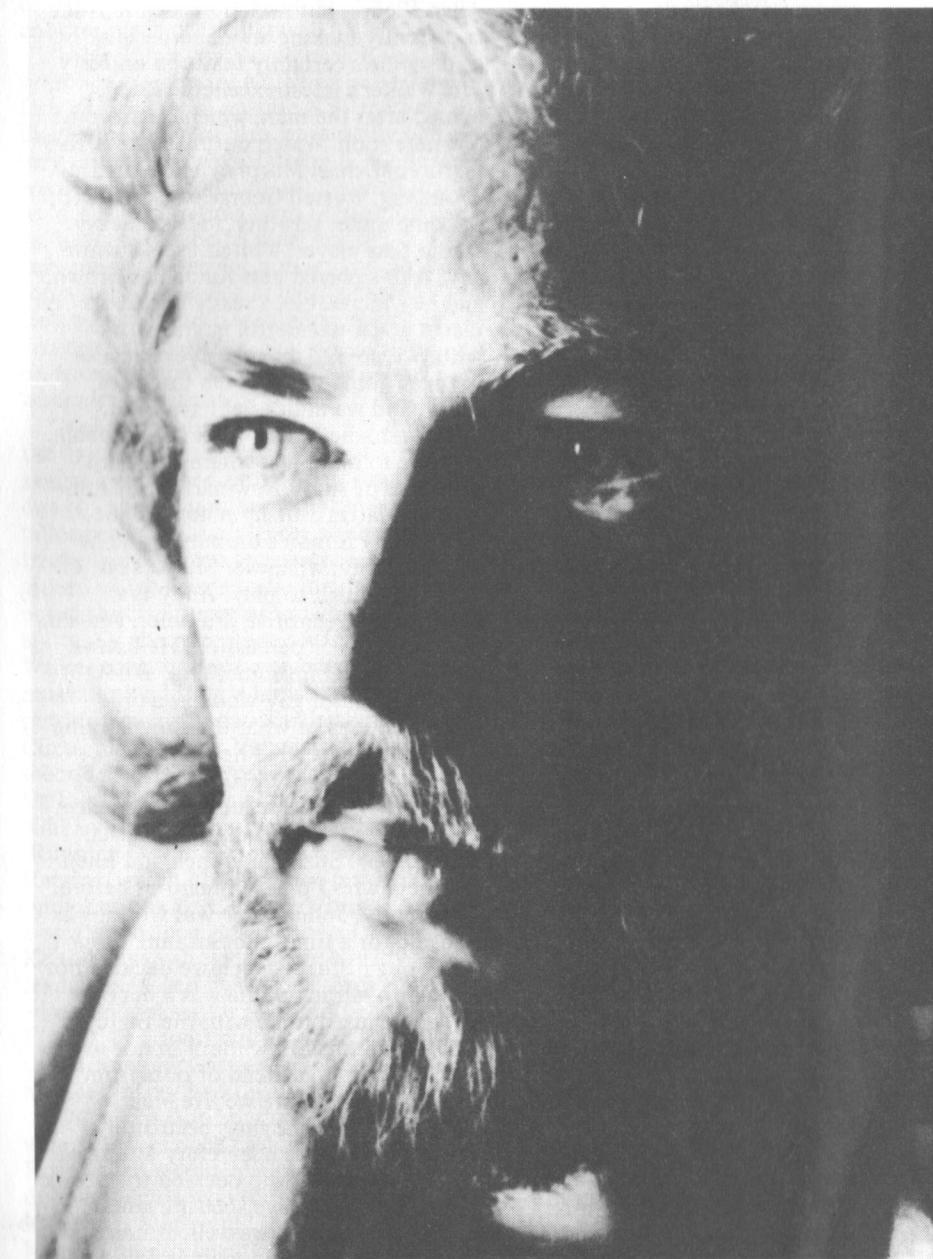
ZZ: What's the origin of McKendree Spring as a name?

Martin Slutsky: "The very banal answer is that it's kind of rhymey, and that it's a misnomer. Actually, my parents own a piece of property, and there's a spring on it. It's called McKenzie Spring, or something like that, and we thought that sounded nice. Strawberry Alarm Clock, McKendree Spring...."

I wonder if the Pure Prairie League have been there too? And by the way, you definitely ought to check out their two albums, particularly the one whose title is their name. On RCA.

The Albums

The first album has never been released in England, so I can't tell you what it's like. However, Mike Dreyfuss has promised to send me a copy, so I'll let you know when I get it. Until that time, the only



Fran McKendree

information I could get is as follows.

Michael Dreyfuss speaking.

"It was called 'McKendree Spring', and it had a track on it called 'Spock', which was about Ben Spock, Dr Spock, who was one of my teachers. He was almost completely ostracised when he began to speak out against the war. He is a very proper New England gentleman, extremely tall, and a great man, a beautiful guy. He has huge hands with which he gestures a lot, and he speaks beautifully. For him to do this was quite strange. He's also kind of a puritan, which you can

see in his writing in the baby books, and a moralist a bit, which may tie in. He claims that his whole anti-war speaking bit was predicated on protecting children. People would have him on their talk shows and say 'Here comes Dr Spock, and we're going to talk about child care,' and the guy would ask him about masturbation or something. Then Spock would say 'Yeah, the reason that the war in Vietnam is bad....', and it was all because of kids. He was tried for conspiracy, and it was one of the first conspiracy trials, and he and the Chaplain

from Yale were tried for encouraging

resistance and draft evasion. I wrote the lyrics to that song, and Fran wrote the music. I like it very much."

Back to Martin Slutsky.

"Also on that album is a song called 'What We Do With A Child' which was written by Nick Holmes, who is also managed by Brovsky Management. They handle Nick, Raun MacKinnon, Jerry Jeff Walker and Keith Sykes, as well as us. That one was our single off the first album. There is also 'No Regrets' by Tom Rush, which we still do, as it's one of our favourite songs. Tom Rush appears to be best known in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We used a theremin on that track. The album was released in the spring of 1970, and produced by Eddie Simon, who is Paul Simon's brother. Eddie Simon now has a guitar school or something, and he didn't know much about producing, while we didn't know much about recording. However, it's not too bad a record."

Album number two, 'Second Thoughts' was released in England in 1971, and you can get it on MCA MUPS 433. After their somewhat unsuccessful first venture with Eddie Simon, their second effort was made in Nashville, not an obvious place for a band like McKendree Spring to go into the studios. Martin Slutsky explains.

"For one thing, we met a new producer, Adam Mitchell, who used to play with the Paupers. [Note: I've got an album by the Paupers on Verve called 'Ellis Island' on which the great ZigZag hero, Al Kooper appears. He knew them because Skip Prokop, drummer with Ellis Island, was on the splendid 'Live Adventures of Al Kooper and Mike Bloomfield' double album, the follow up to 'Super Session'. Hello, trivia lovers!] More to the point, Skip Prokop is now leader of Lighthouse, who are not one of my favourite five bands.] Adam was very rigorous, and we had to rehearse nine to five, or nine to nine, in the studio. That way, the record was made in a week, and I like the results generally. One of the tragedies, which could have prevented the album being bigger, was that on the Eric Andersen song 'What Was Gained', the main vocal was lost, and they had to use the scratch vocal, which they did without telling us, and it just doesn't have the force or the punch which there was in Fran's original vocal, which was very good and built up through the song. They blew that so bad that we said we'd never let another one out without being involved right up to the end, and through the mastering process. We're at the point now where we want to do the whole thing ourselves. We didn't fire Adam Mitchell as a result, because it was a single album agreement, and there was no real talk of continuing. If we wanted him again, we could get him, but if not, he'd be doing commercials in Toronto. I'm not sure that it was his fault anyway, and I blame Elliot Mazer, who engineered the remix. We're very fond of Adam, who is a good man, and plays excellent harp

too. In fact, he plays harp on 'What Was Gained'."

At this point, we discussed a track called 'Friends Die Easy', which I thought was somewhat reminiscent of The Doors, and is sort of reprised on the fourth McKendree Spring album, 'Tracks'. There's little to report, except to say that the discussion turned to the studio techniques of a certain Nashville cat, which I shall not repeat due to the fact that litigation is costly, even if what is said happens to be true. In fact, the only Nashville musicians who played on 'Second Thoughts' were the ace rhythm section of Kenny Buttrey on drums and Norbert Putnam [bass], although it is reported that some of the session supermen came in, and were confused to see an electric violinist and an acoustic guitar player making music together.

Most of the songs are Fran McKendree compositions, apart from the Eric Andersen thing [wrongly credited as Anderson] that has already been mentioned, and 'Fire And Rain', which by now has become the party piece of so many aspiring acoustic guitarists, in much the same way as Fran and Marty used to play 'Suzanne', I should imagine. 'Fire And Rain' has become a tired song by now through gross overuse, and I asked if that was so when McKendree Spring recorded it. Martin Slutsky says not.

"As a matter of fact, if we'd released that song as a single at that time, we'd have had a hit. The publishing company said that ours was the best cover of that song that there was. The only reason we didn't release it was that, ostensibly, James Taylor was going to release it the next week. I said 'Bullshit, man. I know it's a personal song, but I think it'll make it anyway,' but it was too late, and they released his. We played with him for a week at the Bitter End in New York, and heard him doing it. We thought that it was a good tune, and immediately learnt it, and started doing it even before he released it. If we'd released that as a single, we might not be sitting talking to you now.... At one point, we did a number of gigs with Livingston Taylor, and after a few gigs he asked us not to do it. We refused, as it was one of the high points of our show, a mainstay, and subsequently we fell out with him."

'McKendree Spring 3' [MCA MUPS 454] came out here in late 1971. It is a treasured possession of mine, and I must remember to ask MCA if I can replace my extremely worn copy with a nice new one. The track which Mike Dreyfuss talked about earlier, 'God Bless The Conspiracy' is on this album, and is quite indescribably amazing, particularly in a passage of synthesised violin, where the music appears to sound like a negative photograph might sound, were such things audible. Suffice it to say that this track is one of the very few in my collection which I can find nothing to follow; so anti-climactic does another track seem. Therefore, in somewhat the same way as

some of my acquaintances drive themselves insane listening to 'Rainbow In Curved Air' first thing in the morning, I use 'God Bless The Conspiracy' as an artificial means of inducing sleep, because after listening to it, I feel like I've just run a three minute mile or emptied a swimming bath by drinking. After listening to it, I feel as if going to bed is the only thing in the world that it would be sensible to do, so exhausted does it make me. All the above, by the way, is written perfectly seriously, and is meant as a compliment. Try it yourself, if you can't understand my rambblings. And now for something completely different—the third album.

There's a large number of names on the sleeve, the supporting players and other things, so in best ZigZag style, I had to find out about them. What follows is edited highlights of the results of Frame and Tobler's memories, plus additions of factual note by either Martin Slutsky or Mike Dreyfuss.

Bobby Gregg [drums] was discovered to be the drummer on Dylan's 'Highway 61 Revisited', and was also, according to the oracle, Frame, on 'American Pie', although I can't find his name. A little more trivia. Did you know that McLean's first LP was produced by Jerry Corbett of the Youngbloods, that Greg Dewey [ex Mad River and the Fish], played drums on it, and that Don McLean wrote the sleeve note to the double 'Best of Josh White' album on Elektra? Well, you do now. Back to Bobby Gregg—"he's a heavy studio guy, settled in New York, and every once in a while, he does the Johnny Carson show, or something like that. Although he was rather set in his ways, he was very good."

Next, Jerry Burnham, who plays flute. We'd found that he was in the Quinaimes Band, who had an album on Elektra, which wasn't released here, the Fifth Avenue Band, who had an album on Reprise which was, Jake and the Family Jewels [Polydor], and even perhaps played with John Sebastian. He's mentioned in the Jo Mama tree in number 21, if you need some more. All this research apparently impressed McKendree Spring, and they were unable to add much, except one important point, which is that Jerry Burnham is married to Raun MacKinnon, who is the next subject, and that was how they came to meet Burnham.

Now, Raun MacKinnon, who Pete discovered in some folk singing year book for 1964, when she certainly seemed to have long blonde hair, and played guitar. Martin Slutsky with a straight face indicated that he had seen her 'apply' the hair many times before gigs, but then further indicated that he was joking. He also said that she now played piano as well as guitar, and had added some excellent piano to the record under review. Seemingly, Raun has made some records of her own, initially for Cameo [now in the hands of

Allen Klein], but nobody was sure if she is currently making any records as a leader. She's certainly featured on Jerry Jeff Walker's latest excellent album, named after the man, which ought to be out here soon. Watch out, because it also features Michael Murphey and David Bromberg. Russell George was the next to come under scrutiny. "He's a heavy studio bass player, a bitch. He's a white guy, who's played bass for James Brown, and he's incredible, a really good bass player and a wonderful guy to work with. We needed a bass player because we were going through the throes of Larry, and we didn't yet have Fred."

I'm ashamed to say that I was unable to bring to mind just where I'd heard the name of Andy Newmark, the drummer, so Martin Slutsky reminded me. "He's Carly Simon's drummer, and he works for Sly, whenever Sly gets out of jail long enough to play. Andy is a beautiful and sensitive drummer, and can play all kinds of percussion. He listens when you tell him something, and he isn't the kind of guy who has a pre-conceived idea of what the song is going to be, and plays what he wants. He listens to you, and I had a ball playing with him—it was a beautiful experience."

There's a trio of backing vocalists, John Devoe, Suzanne French and Ellen Kearney, who I'd never heard of before. Apparently, John Devoe was working as a roadie for a time, and Suzanne French has a long history, which we decided not to go into, although she was a bebop singer and used to be with the Buddy Morrow band, with whom I'm not over familiar. "She's a friend of ours from Trumansburg, where we live, near Ithica, NY, and she sings beautifully. Ellen Kearney was a secretary at our manager's office, who decided to become a musician, and plays acoustic guitar very funkily, and sings well, although she tends to use only one sound a lot. And she has a wonderful strawberry tattoo on her upper stomach." I'm looking forward to seeing it....But until that day, we'll close the subject with the information that Ellen also sings on the Jerry Jeff Walker album that I've already mentioned. I think she's on the fine track 'L.A. Freeway', which you may have heard on the radio.

Now strings are not totally my thing in a rock context, but on this album, there's a couple of very tasty bits of string accompaniment, particularly on 'Down By The River', which you should all listen to at least once every few days in the Neil Young version. In fact, one of McKendree Spring's great strengths is that they are great interpreters—without losing the essential mood of the song, they can produce a version which stands up on its own. And that's without changing the song a la Vanilla Fudge and 'You Keep Me Hanging On'. On 'Down By The River', the strings sound more like a mellotron than actually a mellotron does, and the name of Alan Raph is mentioned

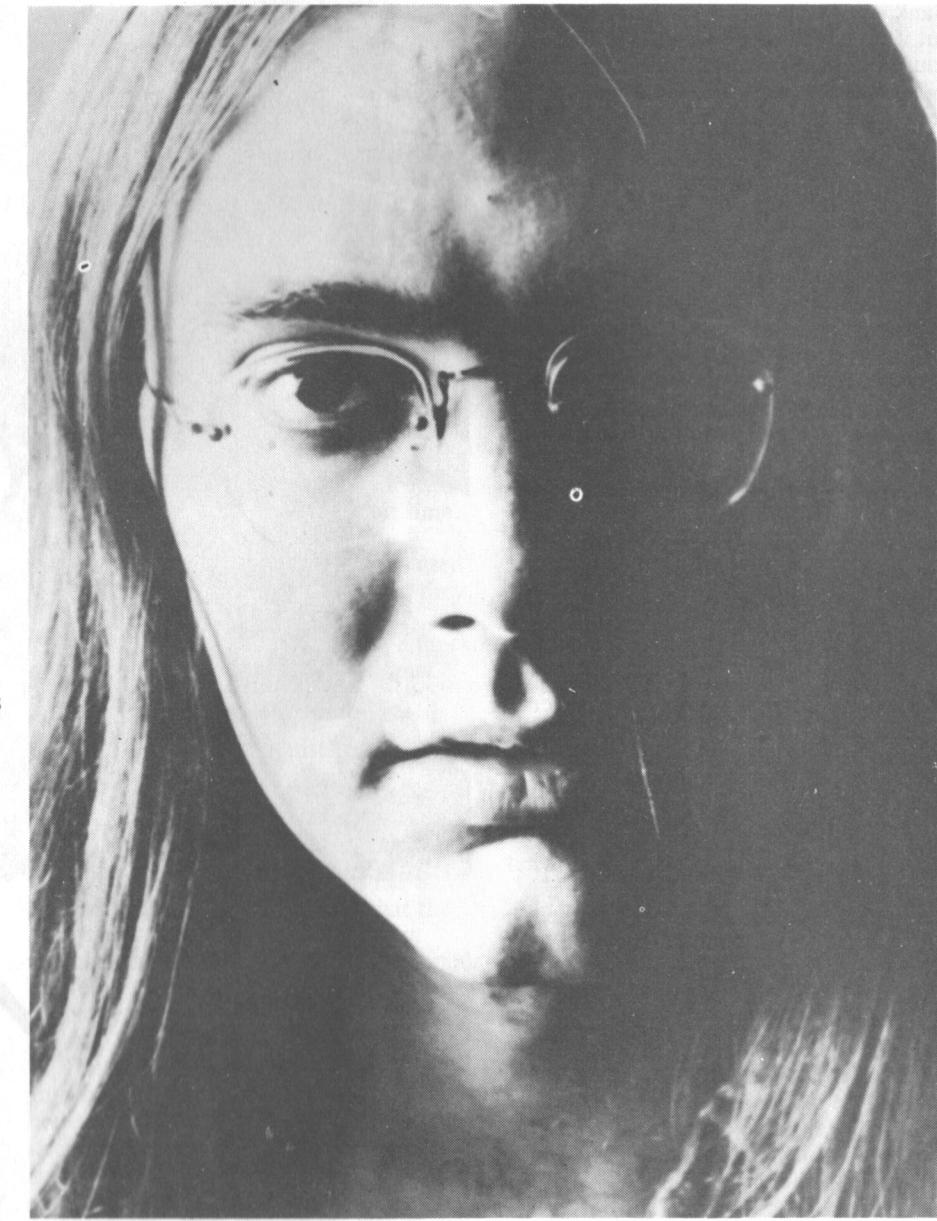
on the sleeve. Martin Slutsky puts in another piece of the jigsaw.

"Alan Raph conducted us and the symphony orchestra which we used for four or five gigs in upstate NY, and we liked working with him, because he had a very interesting way of doing it. While we were making the album, we decided that we'd like him to do a horn section for us, because maybe Michael wanted one very much. So we got him in, and he did some horn and string accompaniments. He's a heavy studio trombone player and arranger, and you can hear him wailing on trombone on 'Down By The River', where he hits that low E."

'McKendree Spring 3' is to my mind the best of the three albums that are available here, and that's in no small way due to the fact that the material seems tailor made. Yet only three of the eight tracks were written by members of the group, which seems to tie in with the point about interpretation which I made above. Of the rest, there's a Jerry Jeff Walker song, but not a recent one. He must think a lot of it himself, because he's put it on two albums, the first one by Circus Maximus on Vanguard, and his second solo LP on Atco, 'Driftin' Way Of Life'. Then there's Arlo Guthrie's 'Oh, In The Morning', which is from his 'Running Down The Road' album on Reprise, which I believe also features the fairly famous Mr Clarence White. There's a very good song called 'Hobo Lady' by Keith Sykes, who, as you've already read, is managed by Michael Browsky, who also looks after McKendree Spring. Finally, as a guest writer, there's a lady called Anna McGarrigle, about whom Martin Slutsky had this to say.

"She is in fact Loudon Wainwright's wife. She was once half of Kate and Roma, who were a quaint sort of folk duet—two girls who did some beautiful love songs that would just tear your heart out, with beautiful harmonies. They played a lot of nice instruments, like autoharp, guitar and piano, and that particular song, 'Heart Is Like A Wheel', flipped us out when we heard it, and we all started playing it, and loved it, and to this day, I think that it's one of the best songs on the album."

The producer on this album was Dave Woods, and those with wonderful memories may recall that he was mentioned in Mac's apocalyptic Dave Van Ronk feature. "He was the lead guitarist for the Hudson Dusters [Van Ronk's band], and we got to know him through Dave Van Ronk. We had heard a few things he'd done, like the Jake and the Family Jewels album, and we decided to do the album with him." It obviously wasn't too bad a relationship, because they used him on the fourth album, too, but before we get into that one, let's say a final few words on 'McKendree Spring 3'. It's one of J Peel's favourite theories that second albums are usually the best work produced by artists, and an example he likes to quote is Neil Young's 'Everybody Knows This Is



Chis Bishop

Nowhere' album, less appreciated than 'After The Goldrush', but in Peel's mind and mine considerably better than its immediate predecessor or successor. It's somewhat of a coincidence that Neil Young's second album contains 'Down By The River' as does McKendree Spring's third, but I feel that 'McKendree Spring 3' is a very important album and certainly seems the pinnacle of the band's achievements up to this point. Until they change into a second gear, all their other records are merely more of the same. Mind you, if you like their music as I do, it's no problem having extra goodies.

I hope you didn't think that excessive, but now we're up to the fourth LP, 'Tracks', released here earlier this year

on MCA MUPS 476. Again, a number of unfamiliar names are mentioned on the sleeve in supporting roles, and here's Martin Slutsky to place them. "Hank DeVito [pedal steel] is a person that we met years ago, when we were the house band at the Bitter End in New York, and he was the lights man. He was heavily into country music, and taught me a whole bunch of country licks that I still use today. Since then, he has begun to study pedal steel exclusively, and is now playing with the New York Rock'n' Roll Ensemble [albums on CBS]. He's an excellent guitar player as well, but we called him in to play pedal steel on 'Don't Keep Me Waiting', because on that tune, we wanted a certain sound that I couldn't get. I play what we call 'the

plank'—just a six string Hawaiian guitar—but it didn't quite have that whining, housewifey, sorrowful sound that you can get with a pedal steel. We had him come in, and he did it beautifully, and I guess since then he has even gotten a lot better. As a matter of fact, he's been doing commercials, and is becoming a fairly heavy pedal steel player in New York, which is a bit of a rarity, if you think about it." All very true, relevant to the track in question, but it should also be noted that there's some quite perfect violin licks by Mike Dreyfuss on this track. On.

"Artie Kaplan is a saxophone player who I have never met, and who was brought in to do the sax solo on 'Train To Dixie' by Keith Sykes. We decided we wanted a sax solo on that one, and we had never heard him, which was our mistake. We left it up to our producer [Dave Woods again] to pick someone who could do a funky sax solo. We wanted something funky and bluesy and rock'n'roll-y, and he picked someone who was terrible. To this day, we regret it, because we think it's a horrible solo." I can only agree with that—I've heard few more pointless solos in this context, and Artie baby sounds like a refugee from some kind of Albert Ayler group—you know, apparently totally unaware of what the instruments around him are doing.

Flipping through a few more of the tracks, there's a very good Jim Kweskin-like number written by Dave Woods, called 'Watch Those Pennies'. For those of you whose first introduction to Jim Kweskin was as a character in the horrific Mel Lyman story of a couple of years ago in Rolling Stone, let me say that the Jim Kweskin Jug Band made some excellent albums on Vanguard in the mid sixties, when the band included Geoff Muldaur, who is now with Paul Butterfield, Maria D'Amato, who is now Mrs Muldaur, plus Bill Keith and Fritz Richmond, who are familiar names on New York folk/rock records of the sixties. A good one to check out is 'See Reverse Side For Title', which was released here on Fontana, and can often be found in cheap racks.

There's also a Dylan track, from 'New Morning', and it's 'The Man In Me'. "We are great Dylan devotees—we love Dylan, and have talked for years about doing a Dylan song, because in the dressing room we always love jamming on Dylan songs. This one seemed appropriate to do, and we had been doing it in the show, and getting off on it, so we decided to record it. We wanted to do a Dylan song, as a tribute to the man, because he has given us so much." Amen.

Now the backup vocalists again, but this time without birthmarks. "Jo Ann Vent is a bitch of a backup vocalist. In fact, she is the most incredible backup vocalist I've ever heard. She arranged and did most of the backup vocals on this new Jerry Jeff Walker album, and she has so much soul, until it could make you



Michael Dreyfuss

crazy. She is wonderful, and actually has an album of her own out." But the other two gents in the same department.... "Bob Hipwell and John Montgomery—we weren't there, and our producer did it. Dave Woods knew them, and had them come in to do it. I wasn't at the sessions, although I think maybe Fran was, but I don't know much about them. Which is a mistake, and one which we will never repeat, mark my words."

Right at the bottom of the credits on 'Tracks', is written 'Digital Delay Lines by Eventide Clockworks'. Guaranteed to make me ask a question, which was answered by Martin Slutsky. 'That is another sideline of our engineer, Steve Katz [N.B. Not Blues Project, Blood Sweat and Tears etc], and Eventide Clockworks is his company. The device is actually like an echo unit, except it's a delay, and you can set the delay for exactly the way you want it. In other words, you can make a guitar sound like two guitars. You know like George Harrison doubles a guitar part? Well, with this gadget, you get the first note, and then you can set it for a fraction, just a fraction of a second, further away, and you get the same thing. So you get a precise edge to the note. We used it specially for acoustic guitars to give a very full sound, like two guys playing. The main use of it on this album is 'Don't Keep Me Waiting' [by Fran McKendree], where I do a kind of structured guitar solo, on which I used heavy delay line. If you listen to it, you'll definitely hear the effect on that track." On this album, in the same place as 'God Bless The Conspiracy' [Side 2, final track], is 'Light Up The Skies', which is an adaption by Mike Dreyfuss and Dave Woods, based on Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons'. I expressed my feeling that this piece was inferior to its logical successor, but Martin Slutsky disagreed. Mike Dreyfuss talks about it.

"I had it in mind to do that with some other pieces too, like Copland's 'Rodeo', but Emerson, Lake and Palmer have already done it. A mediocre job, too, I thought. It wasn't timely then, but maybe I'll try it another time." Martin Slutsky: "It's not as striking as 'Conspiracy', but you see I've heard that one every night for years, and to hear him use his gadgets and toys in other inventive ways, such as that, with a little more cohesiveness to it, using 'The Four Seasons', which I personally love as a piece, flipped me out completely. Right now, at the moment, I'd sooner hear that, but we can't do it live, because it's so complicated, and you need tapes and things. Our new album is a kind of an outgrowth from that, although it has nothing to do with Vivaldi. It will be a suite based on a concept of the seasons in terms of a love story—seasonal changes and so on."

Not an easy concept to understand, and I suppose he may have been putting me on, but we'll charitably suppose not, and close what has developed into the world's longest subhead. Although I'm

quite convinced that the records are the important thing, when you get right down to it.

Mike Dreyfuss—His Thoughts

"My original inspiration in rock was a band called the United States Of America. By the way, Dorothy Moskowitz, who was in that group, is now working with Country Joe. I found out because I was in touch with some people in California about electronics, and I asked them whatever happened to Joe Byrd and the United States Of America, and he told me about Dorothy Moskowitz. Anyway, that band was my inspiration, especially the fiddle player, Gordon Marron. Columbia put an enormous amount of bread behind them, and I thought they were an excellent band, way ahead of their time. It took them all day to set up, and apparently at the Fillmore, the kids used to boo them right off the stage, and they would leave the stage with the stuff still playing. They had pre-recorded tapes, and all that kind of stuff that was just way ahead of their time. It's not a concept I believe in, but it was.

"As far as other violinists go, I like Jerry Goodman very much. He's a friend and an excellent player. Sid Page, who was with Dan Hicks, is also an incredible fiddle player, and I also like Richard Green's work." [Which reminds me that I neglected to mention the fact that the famous Mr Greene, later in Sea Train, was also in that Kweskin band mentioned above.] I expressed the opinion that there probably weren't too many violin players around. I was wrong.

"There are more and more, lots of guys coming out of Juilliard, and other heavy schools, and I suppose some classical jobs are not the most appealing anymore, and a lot of them are into rock anyway."

Mike also plays theremin. I asked him if it was a Lothar, as in Lothar and the Hand People, who had a splendid album on Capitol called 'Space Hymn', where Lothar was a theremin. I thought that a theremin was the forerunner of the synthesiser.

"Well yeah, it was the first electronic instrument, and I think it was invented before the twentieth century by a Frenchman called Theremin, and as you say, Lothar and the Hand People built around it. At the last count, there were two registered theremin players in Local 802 in New York. [Musician's Union type of thing, I imagine.] Lothar and the Hand People are not functioning anymore, but at one time, they used to play the Village Gate constantly. I use the theremin very little—it's on 'No Regrets', and on 'God Bless The Conspiracy', but now I'm much more into synthesiser. I'm looking forward to using the violin in place of keyboards, but it's still to come, because it's a complicated project, involving translating the harmonies. Of course, you can do it with any instrument once you've done it. It involves using a gadget called

a follower, which would follow the harmonics of the instrument, translating them into voltage, and feeding them into an oscillator. They're getting close to it, and Moog himself was working on it for a while, but then stopped because it was too damned hard. He had one that worked, but when he was taking it to the American Electronics Convention in Los Angeles, he dropped it getting off the plane, and unfortunately it was the only prototype. So he didn't continue.

I play the violin through ring modulator, echo, delay, fuzz, wah-wah, and treble and bass boosters." Martin Slutsky: "He has his own little recording studio on the side of the stage. The echo and wah-wah effects he gets are amazing, and no one else plays like that. Nobody believes that he doesn't use a moog when he plays, and it's just those basic rock'n'roll toys." Mike again.

"It was the ring modulator that caused all the controversy with 'God Bless The Conspiracy'. Just those four or five notes on the ring modulator instrumentally distorted the meaning of the song in some people's minds, and got that song banned. If I'd played 'God Bless America' straight, and not put those two bars, or whatever it was, in with the ring modulator, then I think it would have been OK. But of course, it wouldn't have been the same thing...."

The Future

"We're going to produce the new album ourselves, with a little help from our manager, Michael Brovsky, who produced Jerry Jeff's last album. Apart from the suite which we've mentioned, there's a song by Peter Hodgson, the ex-Rhinoceros man, called 'Wake Up', which he taught us when he came to audition. He said we could use it if we wanted, and we decided to use it because it was so groovy.

But otherwise, the rest of the album is entirely us, written, words and music and arranged by us. We figured we've gone the Nashville route, the New York route three times with slick producers, and most of the time it wasn't completely us, and sometimes didn't come off right. What people hear at our concerts is not what they hear on the albums, and we don't think that's right. So we are quite adamant that this new album is going to be completely us. If it doesn't make it, then it's our own fault, and we're prepared to take the consequences."

Need it be said that I enjoyed talking to McKendree Spring. I only hope that you didn't mind reading about it too much, and I hope that it might lead you to be curious enough to want to hear some of this excellent band's music.

John Tobler

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IN THE RED CORNER

THE

PRESS

IN THE BLUE CORNER

ROBERT

PLANT

WHAT THE PRESS SAY

“The Crunge” reproduces James Brown so faithfully that it's every bit as boring, repetitive and cliched as “Good Foot”. Yakyety-yak guitar, boom-boom bass, astoundingly idiotic lyrics (“when she walks, she walks, and when she talks, she talks”).

Rolling Stone

PLANT'S VIEW

To start with, we hired a place, in fact, we went down to Jagger's house and used a mobile truck. We found that using a mobile truck is the most immediate way of getting anything down that has got any semblance of magic to it at all. We went down there and got a few things together, but the sound in the place wasn't quite as good recording-wise as we got in that weird place called Headley Grange, where we recorded ‘Black Dog’ and ‘When The Levee Breaks’ and that sort of thing off the album before, and this was a bit of a deterrent really. Nevertheless, there was quite a bit down there—immediate stuff laid down straight away, and maybe we'd put the vocals on in the studio, or something like that. Songs like ‘D'Yer Mak'er’ which is the finest thing since ‘I'm In A Dancing Mood’ by the Good Good Band. That was done there straight away—those creamy vocals. A lovely song that is. So many people rip us off for it in England but I don't know what they expect us to do. I suppose they expect us to be very serious and very conscientious about everything we do, but it is a nice song. We had just laid down ‘The Song Remains The Same’ which is a real belter—the chords, the sequences, the changes—and it was about Sam and I had been hoping for a long time to do something like, well I am a fan of Rai Donner and people like that, you know, the Elvis impersonators; and I have always wanted to do something like that. The old C, A minor, F G chord sequences, same as the Ricky Nelson stuff. So Jim started playing a sequence like that and Jonesy put a sort of blue-beat bass line to it and Bonser did a straight drum thing and it just started off, great. And everybody is going “Oh, this is really good” you know? That was born there and then.

VERDICT

Led Zeppelin 10, The Press 0

“Dyer Mak'er” is even worse, a pathetic stab at reggae that would probably get the Zep laughed off the island if they bothered playing it in Jamaica. Like every other band following rock's latest fad, Led Zeppelin shows little understanding of what reggae is about—“D'yer Mak'er” is obnoxiously heavy-handed and totally devoid of the native form's sensibilities.

Rolling Stone

I am just upset that there are a lot of critics who approach their station in a rather strange manner. They get out of touch with us—I mean, there are some people who we took with us on the road a long time back and said “Come and see”. We'll bring a guy across if he can get it through to the people. I mean, we know how good we are it's just that if the guy relates when he saw properly then the job is done. We brought a lot of guys around and they dug it, and they were bewildered and they stood there with their raincoats over their arms from the minute they got off the plane, to the minute they got back on again and they were in a complete stupor and a state of disbelief. Amazing things happened and he has got to go back to the MM—or whatever the paper is—or whatever there is back there in Blighty and write it all down, and all of a sudden you don't see him any more for ages but we still think everything is cool with him, and then we find out that he has just lost contact with what we are and what we are as people and what we are doing musically, and I mean we are a pretty bouncy group you know, and if you don't catch us on the bounce then you lose us altogether. He lost us altogether, so when they reviewed our album, well we had a review of the 4th album in one paper which warranted a little more than it got. It got about eight lines at the bottom of page 10 or something like that. “‘Stairway To Heaven’ is a slow boring ballad” and then on to the next song, and it really broke my heart, because if anybody is swayed by a guy who has sat down and listened to it and come out with that idea of it, I can see that it can be destroying in the end naturally, because if they pick on us long enough people are going to believe that we have had it, but instead of that it just goes from strength to strength.

Led Zeppelin 10, The Press 0

I'm shattered that four such talented musicians can produce so much shit so slowly.

An unidentified press cutting

Our metabolism gives us our energy to perform. It doesn't matter where we are. Do you know that I did some recording with some of the Bombay Symphony Orchestra in Bombay, and afterwards we went to this silly club. I mean Bombay, unless you have been to Bombay you can't really imagine the stink, and the wretchedness, and the impoverished state of things. The upper class Indian, and the Anglo-Indian—the people that are clambering and grabbing the Western idea—it's going to fall right through their fingers, because it is going to collapse before they get a good grip of it; but they will grab it enough to open a discotheque in sunny Bombay where you have got six million people sleeping on the street every night, and taxis just driving over them by accident when they don't see them in the dark, and you have got a disco around the corner called the ‘Slipped-Disc’. So Page, Plant and Cole wandered in there one night and it was, “Oh very pleased to have you here would you care for a drink”. Before we knew where we were we were playing, and I was singing through a fender amplifier about 15" x 12", and Page was playing on a Fujirama [?] guitar with piano strings on it, and we were playing ‘Whole Lotta Love’ but like the bass and the drummer fell apart and they just kept me and Page on stage blowing up with this whole clubfull of elated people who have never seen Western rock musicians, let alone heard him squawk through a 12" x 15" amplifier which must have come over with the Nazi infiltration or whatever it was.

Led Zeppelin 10, The Press 0

We found Roy Harper from his first record actually. I went to see him and he does so much to the minds of people when they are watching him play, that I thought this is the kind of opponent that I like. I love a mental/verbal pingpong. He is really into that. He is so like, so, oh such a poser you know, a fine, fine, prolific man; but a man who plays on his own for a long time, gets into a lot of little idiosyncrasies. When I first used to know him he used to go into these depressions. One morning, oh, in a hotel in London, Maureen and I were staying there and Harper was too, and he came out of his room without saying a word, and he handed me a newspaper on which he had written, "We are all alone. We are all separate" and he wouldn't speak to me. After about two hours of trying to get through to the guy, I just burst into laughter and I took him in the pub and bought him a double scotch and rammed it down his throat and, of course, at that time, he didn't drink, eat meat, look up at the sky, tie his shoelaces, nothing like that. He roared with laughter too and I took him back to Kidderminster and got him some scrumpy cider. We have all got a great liking for the guy. It has just gone on over the years. He is a genius, and unfortunately, well, the people who can rip our albums off, fair enough, that's alright, the people who come and watch us on stage know what it is all about. They buy an album and they can either like it or lump it, but I am sure after a few plays they get the idea of what's going on and they become part of that cycle of which we are maybe a quarter of the way around. They know from 'Dazed And Confused' or 'Good Times Bad Times' to 'No Quarter'—they have been following us. I think they are glad that it is not all 'Whole Lotta Love'. With poor old Harper, every time he does something, they are really down on him like a ton of bricks.

ZZ: Sometimes he does have a devastating effect on audiences.

RP: Great, so does a thunderstorm you know.

ZZ: When did you choose him for San Francisco?

RP: I would choose him for anything, anytime. He hasn't had any records that have been distributed over here. There has been no attempt to get what he has got to say across. When he's on the bandwagon as he used to say. He is like the conscientious objector—he doesn't really want to be a star, but he does in as much as what he has got to say is important enough for it to be listened to by a lot of people. Whether or not the Americans tomorrow are going to be able to get a grip of it I don't know, because he is a bit hard to understand first time around. I wanted to get some projector so that they could project his lyrics as he sang. When we did that hats off to Roy Harper thing on the 3rd album me and Pagey just sat in the studio and played through some distorted machines and said, hats off to Roy Harper. It's gotta be, all the roadies at the end of the truck said, "Yeah" banging tambourines. And old Harper he didn't know what to say, but his time will come you know.

It's good to be in San Francisco [cheers]. I like San Francisco [more cheers]. You have an important news-paper based here in San Francisco [boos]. I don't like that paper

Led Zeppelin 10, The Press 0

[greater cheers]. It's called Rolling Stone [enormous boos].

Jimmy Page on stage in San Francisco

audiences over here. It isn't a 'Whole Lotta Love' rapport, it's like the 'Stairway To Heaven' type rapport. We walked on last night, at the Forum, Los Angeles, and 18,000 people were there and there were about 16,000 lights burning, glowing among the crowd. You walk out there and you are filled with something fantastic and you play your balls off and they give you what you give them. Great, superb. So America now, they have got the right idea. They don't expect 'Whole Lotta Love' all evening. You can tell when you have got a heavy rock audience and when you have got an audience who are into all aspects of what we do. Surely after five years, people realise that we have got far more to offer than just a few heavy riffs.

There is a really bitchy attitude to musicians and music in England that really pisses me off. There is a lot of childishness. The press. In fact, I know quite a few people who have stopped buying the MM because they can't believe any more the reviews that they have seen for concerts that they have attended, and the Raver column, no the flavour column—you must be careful here otherwise I will get sued—it is an excuse to get all the bitches out, and it is really silly that everything should be so silly, everything is so good. We are supposed to be making people happy and they are supposed to be transposing on the printed sheet. It's Emerson Lake and Palmer or bust. Academic rock. I don't care anyway, who gives two hoots, it doesn't matter. As long as I have The Valiant every week, I don't mind—yes, Captain Hurricane—I need the comics.

Contemplation-wise, I think 'The Rain Song' was very seriously approached with Page's chords, and I worked hard on the vocals there. I had quite an experience. The result is in those vocals and in the lyrics.

Led Zeppelin 10, The Press 0

... a malaise began to creep in reaching a nadir in the sadly indulgent 'D'yer Mak'er', a cod pop tune that is not worthy of them
Chris Welch Melody Maker

Beck, Bogert & Appice, Black Sabbath, the Groundhogs, Robin Trower—the list is long and they all fare musically better than the Zep because they stick to what they do best. Page and friends should similarly realize their limitations and get back to playing the blues-rock that moves mountains. Until they do Led Zeppelin will remain Limp Blimp.
Rolling Stone

There was one promotor a while back who was a gezer in the Indian Reservation—Don Fardon, who is now working for an agency as a booker or something like that, and it was a typical sort of set-up where they had the monopoly over a certain number of pub halls, and I had a group called 'Listen' which the Move ripped-off all the ideas from, flashing TV sets, and flashing lights on stage and tail coats and things, and they used to monopolise all these places. The guy came up to me one day and said, 'Robert, what has happened to you? From what you used to do....' I spent six months doing things like Martha and the Vandellas stuff and then I got sick of it. So I went on to the Band of Joy and he said, 'In six months time you will be on the dole son.' And in six months time I had just bought a derelict farmhouse, which I couldn't have bought on dole money. I was really chuffed—actually I believed I would be on the dole—but I wasn't going to give up what I wanted to do, so I did some road making. Actually, I layed half the asphalt on West Bromwich High Street. All it did for me was it gave me 6/2d an hour, an emergency code tax and big biceps. All the navvies used to call me the pop-singer. Really funny, because I had some terrible records out.

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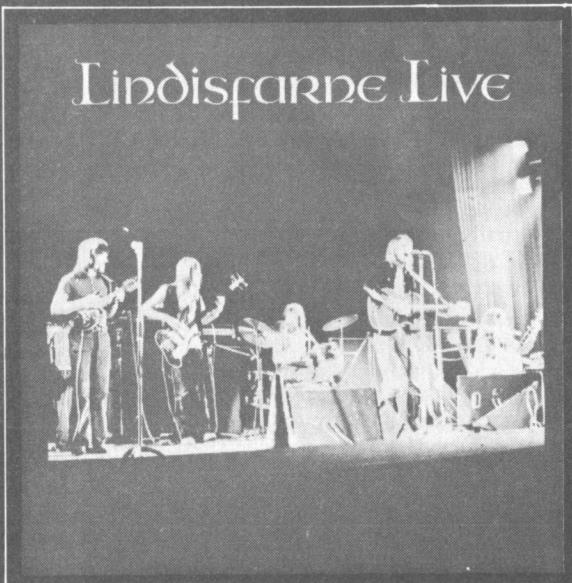
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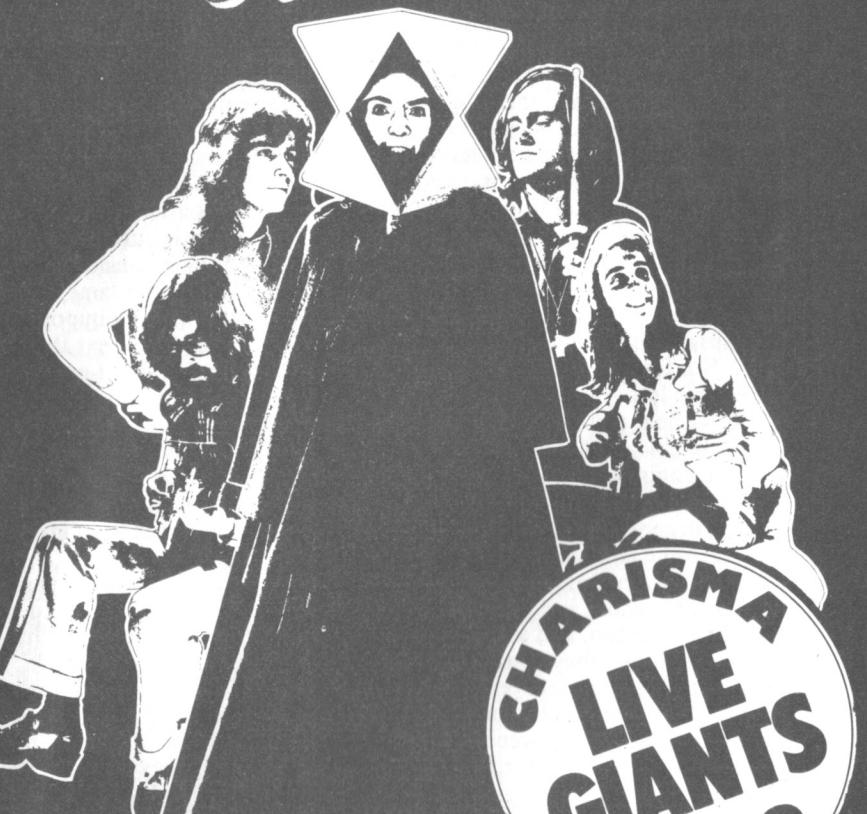
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RF: Who lumbered it on you? Phil?

ZZ: I just wanted to do it.

RF: I don't do interviews.

ZZ: You never do interviews?

RF: No.

ZZ: Why is that?

RF: I suppose because I have nothing to say—that's the first point—and the second thing is that the people that I meet usually have nothing to say to me.

ZZ: That's a funny place to start an interview.

RF: It does rather tend to drain one's conversation.

ZZ: I first saw Crimson in the park in Hyde Park in, what, 69? which was a great gig, and Family were on the same bill. Why have there always been these changes in Crimson?

RF: It's a prima facie case of instability. The next question is 'Why should Crimson be unstable?' One could infer that I am an unstable personality, but I think that most people would tend to disagree with that.

ZZ: There were rumours after the Hyde Park gig that somebody had put enormous amounts of money up behind you, and you were going to go away, and everything was going to be right, and it was obviously too good to be true.

RF: What happened was that the band borrowed a total of £8,000 from a semi-retired industrialist who was related by marriage to one of the men in the band's aunt which gave us time to rehearse. It supported us for the time that we rehearsed and it also bought us some equipment and it gave us a small degree of power in that we couldn't be manipulated quite as much as new bands tend to be, and I think it explains one of the reasons behind the King Crimson legend—its inaccessibility—the band doesn't have to do an awful lot of things that it doesn't want to do. It gives the band a certain degree of power. It has put the band beyond financial manipulation.

ZZ: What happened to the initial investment?

RF: It all disappeared—followed quite closely by another £42,000 in the same year.

ZZ: From that same industrialist?

RF: No, from the record company. When everyone left at the beginning of 1970, Pete Sinfield and myself inherited a considerable debt. The band was united by the common denominator of intense frustration and animosity towards the world in general, and ourselves in particular. Mike Giles fell in love; which he did for the first time about the beginning of King Crimson, and Ian McDonald for the first time too, and as these relationships developed they found these relationships more satisfying than the band could offer, and as Ian became less frustrated his playing went completely to pot. It's one of the unfortunate things that creativity is most possibly furnished by pain inside. I recently read an interview in Sounds, where a member of a very successful English rock group said that he still did tours with the group because he didn't want to become a

!WARNING! THIS IS A LONG & RAMBLING INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT FRIPP

band leader—I can be a band leader but it is not a task that I want or seek, and I shun a lot of the tasks that fall on a band leader; for example, doing interviews. I feel also that there is a far more potent and subtle way of influencing a group by being a band leader. This band takes it in turns to be the band leader. We all three of us know that we don't actually have to say anything now to get something across; we can influence people by more subtle influences—and these are the sort of forces that I am interested in. And you can hear it now—this is it. The first band had it as well, but it has incredibly little to do with music. Russel Unwin in the Melody Maker sussed it actually. Worked it out—he said that bands like this new Crimson depend only in part upon music—they depend on creating 'magical atmosphere' and the music is only a part of doing that. I am not really that interested in music; it is only recently that I began to think again in musical terms. This morning I was sitting upon the lavatory, and I found that the natural functions were particularly good moments for catching insights or ideas—I don't know why I get all my best ideas either urinating or defaecating.

ZZ: Quite a few people have I am sure. It is a very British thing.

RF: It's a British group fetish. There is not one day in the British musicians' life without some orifice being held up to examination. Luther was always constipated, and would spend his life upon the lavatory. Lately I have been thinking more in musical terms. It relates not to an aural concept but to a visual concept—in other words a reverse of the logic of seeing, to the logic of hearing whereas in daily life I have been doing just the reverse which is trying to listen to what I see. I believe in Jewish mysticism where the approach is aural—eg one *hears* the word 'GOD'—as opposed to other religions where you see THE LIGHT. If one takes it a little further, one can

saw that I could express myself with music. As I went on, I didn't play much music with Giles, Giles and Fripp. I started playing music with King Crimson but I only got into music then. Not so long ago—I suppose it was last year—I completely abandoned music as such—in other words I stopped thinking of music as being music and I got to the point now where I tried to short circuit the processes involved. I am not a musician by any stretch of the imagination and since quite substantially I am not interested in music either, it has given me rather a unique approach to music in that I am such an awful musician, whatever I play is bound to be, to a certain degree, original.

ZZ: It is almost a naive approach, and there is clarity in naivety.

RF: Yes, I went through a period when I felt that I ought to learn about music but I reached the realisation that I would never be a musician. An even more staggering one was that I didn't even want to be a musician. Following fast on the heels of that, really, is that I didn't want to be anything. I just wanted to be.

ZZ: You never wanted to go to university.

RF: A university could never give me a better education than I am having at the moment. One of the best ways of learning is to sit down and listen to the wind. But in order to learn you have to sit and listen to the wind for at least three weeks, and the way that my life is structured at the moment that is very difficult. And since it is very difficult to sit and listen to the wind and concentrate on listening for longer than 5 minutes I can conclude that I am not yet ready for that, so that I accept that I am not ready for certain things but when I am then life might be better.

ZZ: All this seems to be the opposite of 'Rock Musician On The Road In America'.

RF: I have no idea of what that could possibly be...I can only say that when I turned professional, which was at the age of 21, it was an act of desperation. I was manically depressive and I considered that the freedom that I felt was necessary in my life because I was in a situation that was very heavy—I had fallen in love with two ladies, and I found myself asking the question 'What on earth are you doing wrong'. But we are rambling.

ZZ: ZigZag always rambles, that is the beauty of it.

RF: Good for ZigZag.

ZZ: Or the boredom of it for the people that don't buy it.

RF: On the subject of boredom, I can think of few more boring bands than King Crimson. May I say that everyone in it is a thorough bore; it is really tedious being out for a night with this band. It even bores the band, so how it can fill anyone else with enthusiasm is beyond me. On the subject of love, what I do is I put my heart on my hand and proffer it so that it can either be accepted readily, with a generous embrace or else pins can be stuck in it. If you shut off the generous feelings of love you shut off all the good things too—you shut off the

pain. In short I decided to suffer the good things with the bad and this is the key to truth throughout the universe; whatever situation you embrace, you embrace the good things with the bad things. So any situation that you find yourself in is perhaps not potentially any better or any worse than any other it just is, and you just happen to choose the situation which you feel is in great or vibrates the greatest symphony sympathy, perhaps sympathy would be better with the state your soul is in at that moment. In other words whatever situation that you find yourself in you just make the best of it.

ZZ: Have you ever embraced drugs?

RF: No, but nearly everyone that uses them is harmed. Coffee is the only drug that I allow myself. There are physical drugs which I allow myself—from time to time. Television for example. I prefer the company of druggies because they have had a glimpse of certain states of reality which I am interested in embracing. But there are gates to those conditions which give you far more control over your situation. I do find that drugs open an astral doorway without giving you any of the power to close it. This can let through very potent and very harmful elemental forces which can effect the personality to a very dangerous degree. One might find oneself manifesting obsessive tendencies or one might not.

ZZ: Observing English rock bands here, they go through enormous old time circuses littered with drugs and it is obviously a life style—why?

RF: The key to it is that they are guilty of the money they earn. I think the key to understanding the musician's personality is his insecurity, I think this is the great key to it all, the need to bolster himself up with various forms of support, little ego boosts, all this—I find it sad but I can understand it to a degree.

ZZ: You are putting your own head on the line. You have got to have absolute confidence.

RF: Well, we are all vessels for forces—the particular choice that we have is to choose which force will work through us. What I am concerned with doing, having chosen a particular force which I wish to put through, is to make myself as far as possible, a very good vessel. Now, whenever I play anything which is magical and amazing, which happens from time to time, I know that it is not myself which is responsible. Whenever it is bad it is only the vessel which is bad, and I accept the responsibility for that.

ZZ: Tell me about the future of the band. Say it becomes, well it is very successful, the album got very well reviewed, when happens then if you become enormously successful?

RF: I have to say this: coming back to the interview thing, I don't do interviews because what I have to say, most people either won't relate to or will think that I am a nut, which I am not—

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alternatively I am. The people that will understand what I am saying, will understand what I am saying and won't bother to read it so what I am saying is inevitably boring so I find it perhaps rather self-indulgent. I recognise that it is not in the slightest bit important whether the band is successful on any level at all. I am rapidly becoming a cult figure—me—can you imagine a more dreary bloke? A chick in Chicago, 30 years old, turned to me with a kind of cracked smile crossing her face and said, 'You are a genius' and a guy came up to me at some gig with FRIPP written all across his t-shirt and said 'I am the central front for a bunch of people in this town who think that you are it. You are a genius'. If one's values are really that weak you can actually believe all that shit. The bloke said, 'Well what do you have to say?' and I said, 'Well I play and that's really very dear'. I have always known that I have a certain power and that in some way I have a destiny. I am pretty sure that by the time I am 30 I will be able to retire. I am now at the time where I am in a situation where I can work harder and I think by the time I am 30 I will be able to do that.

ZZ: What would you work at?

RF: I think that music will always be with me as a tool. I want to find just one chord that vibrates so that all I have to do is walk on stage or make a record on one chord so that it vibrates, and having done that there will be nothing to do. You can relate this to the traditional magical idea that if you vibrate the name of god properly the universe will shatter.

ZZ: Can you tell me something about the last album and how that was put together?

RF: It took about three months in the studio. I just worked at it intensely.

ZZ: Which studio was it? Island?

RF: No, Command. It was very good, the best album that has come out.

ZZ: Command has a very bad reputation.

RF: Justifiably so, I am afraid to say, having worked there quite a lot. The actual equipment in there is hopeless. Hopeless.

ZZ: Why did you stick it out? For instance, Monty Python of all people stayed there one night and walked out, because the engineer said that they weren't funny. And they moved stock and barrel to Trident.

RF: We started in another studio which wasn't too successful for us, so we had to find a studio that had time available and Command was the only one. So we had to do with it what we could do with it. I like all the people in Command very much, very nice people. But, for example, the desks aren't earthed which involves hilarious things, on the mixing; I had to reverse all the mixing techniques to do it. Awful. I hope never to record again in there.

ZZ: How was the album recorded?

RF: By blood and sweat and by very little else.

ZZ: Did you go in with the music or did that just happen?

RF: We went in there knowing the music pretty well. I won't record music which I haven't taken on the road anyway.

ZZ: It seems a very good, logical thing to do, but commercially, people seem to want to do it the other way.

RF: Well the record company always says that they need an album before we go out which is a fallacy. No one in the record company would accept that. The other thing is that most groups need the advance from the record company in order to go on the road and do it. Myself I would rather trundle around the country in the back of a van. Get the band together and then record. However, we seem to be in the fortunate position where we can borrow money to put us on the road. May I say that with luck at the end of the first financial year, we might be even—that's staggering.

ZZ: That has never happened in your history?

RF: Every year that happens—we have always been balancing the books but you have to wait for the money to come in. I am still earning a little from the first album, but it takes so long to actually get a profit margin from recording.

ZZ: Do you like the idea of doing a single?

RF: No, I detest the idea of doing a single, I detest the idea of doing any form of recording whatsoever. I will never do another photo session. Ever!

ZZ: Why then are you making a single?

RF: I ask myself the same question and the answer that I receive is that I am in the minority—I have been told, and I believe managers of the band when they say, 'If you never record again it will harm the group's growth and career and I am sure the other three men also enjoy recording, so, since I have a great dedication to the new few years of my life in promoting King Crimson, then I go along with it. It wouldn't worry me in the slightest if we had a singles hit and became a radio one band, because it would merely be broadening our base. Supposing we became a hit single and we had hundreds of little girls running up to us at concert halls and throwing their underwear at me—a situation which I would find most exciting I might add—the band would handle it quite superbly.

I have no doubt. Also it will be an interesting stopgap, and will give something to the American record company to work at. It will be an excuse to tour the States in September, because most

record companies like bands and acts having records out when you are over here. I suppose that is why the band is making a single.

ZZ: Has it been written?

RF: I don't know, I really don't know.

ZZ: You would even do Top of the Pops?

RF: I have done it before, so why not again?

ZZ: Surely you wouldn't do 'Sugar Sugar' or something like that?

RF: If it felt right in the timing then yes. The forms of music, going back to creating a magical atmosphere, are not important. If we wish to create a mood, and 'Sugar Sugar' helps us to get into it then sure. There is an awful lot of humour in the band and people don't pick up on it; in the same way, I am never supposed to laugh or smile. I spend much of my life chuckling, and because I don't shake like a jelly and fall on the floor, people don't think I laugh and have a sense of humour

ZZ: When you are on the road in America, what do you do most of the time? Do you read a lot?

RF: I have never been able to determine what surroundings are just right for me. The nearest to it is my cottage in Dorset but I know that this is only really right for me as a haven and a shelter. A number of coincidences resulted in me getting the cottage.

ZZ: Hardy?

RF: What a doomy bloke Hardy was.

ZZ: Doomridden yes, 'Mayor of Casterbridge'.

RF: I read 'Under The Greenwood Tree' nine times and I could probably recite almost a quarter of the book by heart. The happiest book he ever wrote was the 'Heroes of Wife', pondering adultery on the marriage night. I really don't make too much of it. I found myself being, I suppose, I should have been in an earlier century. In fact, I was in an earlier century, but I have to get into this one, and this isn't the place either. I don't find it despondent.

ZZ: Can you tell me something about the relationships within the band, are you all very different, I mean you have just brought in the guy from Family.

RF: John got into the band originally because I use low magic and an alarming sequence of coincidences took place which led John into the band. Do you believe in magic?

ZZ: To be quite honest I don't know anything about it. I am religious when planes take off.

RF: Maybe you should catch more flights. David Cross ended up in the band through a number of coincidences and Bill ended up in the band because I was in his bath when a lady in Wimborne was magic for me. That explains the members of the band apart from Jamie—who was an inevitability—people were telling me about him for a number of years and one day I phoned up and said 'hello' and I felt as if we knew each other. With Jamie I have a very considerable rapport. Jamie is a monk in the Tibetan monastery near Edinburgh.

From King Crimson to being a monk is not in fact so great a leap as it seems. At least not for me. I think my role in the band as a personality is that I am the common denominator; I am not, however, always strong enough to tackle a situation of tension. I think the men have an overriding love for each other which goes beyond the words; we have a commitment to each other which is really not a commitment because when anyone has had enough they will go, with all the love and respect in the world. I know the men fairly well, well enough to know whether or not to tell outsiders about them. It is all in the music.

ZZ: Composition always interests me and it is always hard to ask musicians about, because they compose as we speak and write.

RF: Bill would probably talk a lot about it, but I would say that he probably doesn't know what he would be talking about, and he would probably agree with that.

ZZ: Is it a team thing?

RF: Yes.

ZZ: It doesn't always work, for a group like Genesis, their team thing at the moment, seems not to be working.

RF: They are not a team.

ZZ: I presuppose that it isn't working because I am not part of them.

RF: I would say that you are right. Genesis have the first King Crimson mellotron—the one that was used on the first album and I spoke to Peter Gabriel when we were in Chicago and he said they are very influenced by the first album and I hear Steve the guitarist playing a few phrases which are very similar. I think they are a good band, but they disappoint me.

ZZ: They seem to be totally potential.

RF: Yes, in the same way that Yes were in the early days. They always frustrated me because they never quite made it. To come back to composition; the first band ceased to become a team, but with this band, it is a team, and it depends on respect really. Mike Giles had a good thing as to why a band stays together. He said that three elements are involved, money, music and friendship. If you have any two of those three the band stays together. So if you like someone and make a lot of money, you don't need to like the music, and if you like the music and all the friendship, you don't need the money. I think he's probably very right. With this band, we enjoy the music, we will make a good living, and we get on well, but from time to time we have flare-ups.

ZZ: About?

RF: About nothing really, a person is uptight and seeks an excuse in some situation that has happened. It's only a weakness. We could point to a particular instance but it wouldn't mean much.

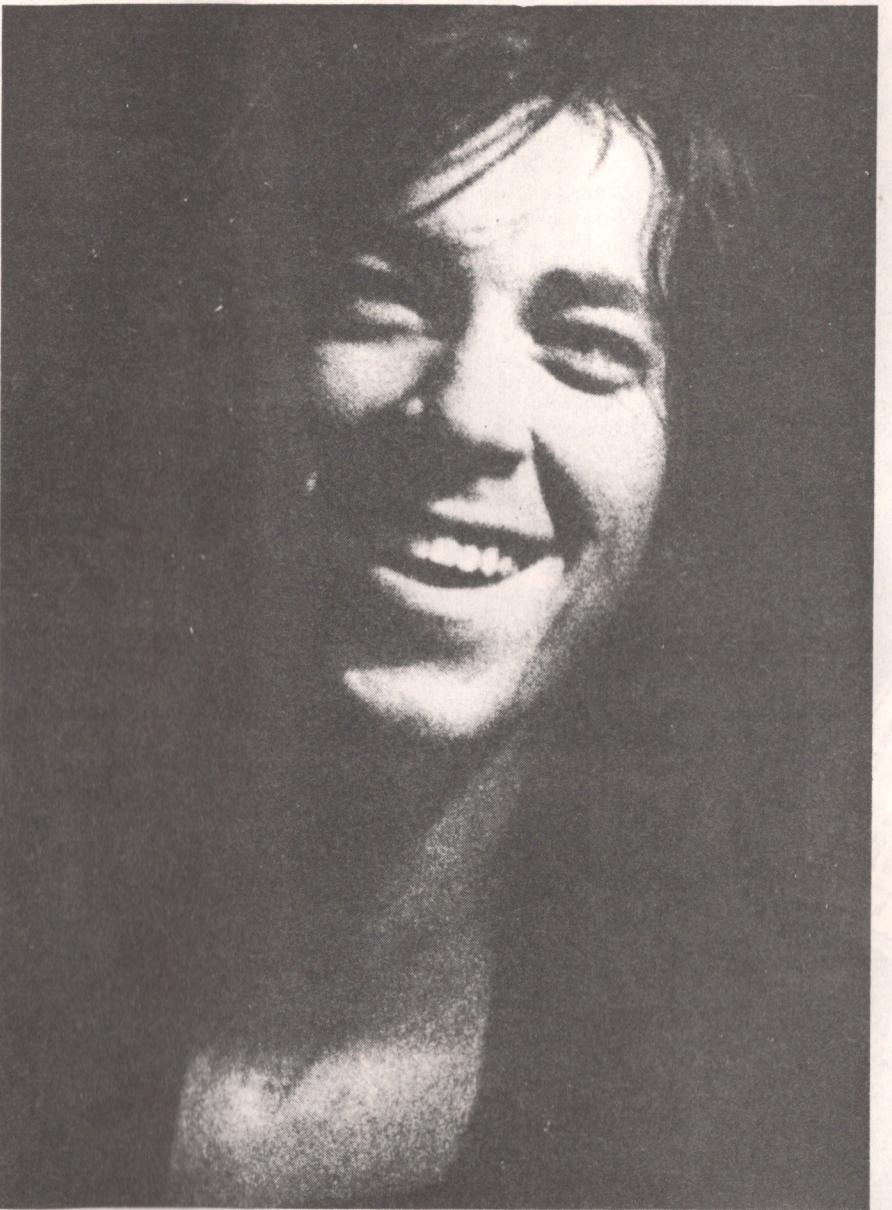
ZZ: How long will they stay together?

RF: Well now is a moment in eternity. For ever. This band has the potential to completely revolutionise the rock industry.

Michael Wale



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Mr SCAGGS AND HIS MAGIC MUSIC

I can't think of any musician who has given me more pleasure than Boz Scaggs. Not the pleasure of some kind of super-super energetic bounce like The Faces, nor the pleasure of acknowledging some kind of genius at work, like Tim Hardin. No, it's kind of an all season, moist eyed, trying-very-hard-to-supress-a-smile pleasure. His records are the sort of music I put on for my friends, and if that sounds precious, then too bad; the truth is that for every other record, in my somewhat meagre collection, that I play, I play twice as many Boz Scaggs' records. If you don't share my views, even only slightly, then turn on to the

next interview, because this interview is by a devotee in front of his hero.

I have to pay homage to the chap who helped with this interview, Mike Haines, who runs Noel Edmonds' record shop in the King's Road, and besides being one of the most informed, and enthusiastic music lovers in London, is a great mate of Boz' and spent some time with him when he was recording 'Boz Scaggs And His Band'; and Bob Kingsbury, the Art Director of Rolling Stone, who mailed the old photos that adorned the Atlantic album. And finally—thanks to the man himself, for his music, and for the time he took to answer our questions.

It may sound corny, but to meet and

to talk to, Boz was exactly the sort of fellow that one might have been led to expect from his music—warm, relaxed, and friendly. Since this intro is turning into a general appreciation society, I'd also like to thank Clive Arrowsmith who provided the photos, and also co-wrote some of the songs on 'Boz Scaggs And His Band'; and Bob Kingsbury, the Art Director of Rolling Stone, who mailed the old photos that adorned the Atlantic album. And finally—thanks to the man himself, for his music, and for the time he took to answer our questions.

Boz didn't add much to what has already appeared in Rolling Stone No 80, concerning his early life in Texas, his travels all over the world, and his final reunion with his old mate Steve Miller in San Francisco.

ZZ: When you were playing live with Steve's band didn't you find it hard to play some of those songs—like 'Song For Our Ancestors'?

BS: Well 'Sailor' was completed in July 1968, and I left in August, and that material was all written in the studio as we made the album, and none of it had been played on gigs before. We used to do some of the stuff from the 'Children Of The Future' album, on stage. One side is a sweet sounding thing, 'We Are Children Of The Future' kind of thing. We performed most of that material except for the violins. There was a sequence of the London Underground, and a couple of other things, and we got some of that on stage by using tapes. But making 'Sailor' was strange because all we had was the title when we went in. It was going to be called 'Sailor' and the idea was that the whole album was going to be about early morning on the wharf, a sailor comes home from being away for years, and he was very young when we went away, and he comes back to his old city. He gets back in touch; he wants to go see his old girlfriend and see his parents and hit a few of the places that he used to go to, and see some of his old buddies. Through the course of the album, each song would be about one of these episodes, seeing his chick, raving up with his old mates. And in the course of all the songs he'd grow a little older and wiser and find that it wasn't as he'd hoped. Everything had changed, he'd left there for a reason, and he couldn't stay there for the same reason, so he goes back off to sea. We got as far as the opening sequence, the fog horns and that. It was supposed to depict an early, quiet morning and that's as far as we got with the whole thing. Glyn and the rest of us went out and collected the sound effects. We went down to the waterfront, and taped all the ships, and we got a lot of sound effects records.

The idea of a continuing theme, we only retained by creating segues between the songs, and right after the opening song, we wanted a segue of rain, just to create a mood of rain and then get into 'Dear Mary'; and the little baroque trumpet thing at the end was for the same reason.

ZZ: How did you come across Glyn?

BS: The manager that we had in San Francisco came on a sort of scouting tour over here to check out houses and studios. We weren't sure that we were going to do it, but he met Glyn through some circumstance or other. At the time he was basically an engineer, he was doing The Stones, and Glyn expressed an

interest in doing it. So Harvey the manager came back and said "There's this superb engineer, a great cat, and I've found a house," and it was all possible. So we came here in January of 1968, and we got settled in and started work at Olympic with Glyn, and he turned out to be much, much more than an engineer, and had as much of a hand in producing the album as we did, although he's not given credit on the album sleeve. He really got the whole thing—the perspective—together.

ZZ: You were busted weren't you?

BS: Yeah, in February. Over in Eaton Place. Our secretary back in San Francisco had a Valentine's Day box of chocolates covered in satin, and she'd taken the chocolates out and filled it with weed, Mexican grass, and sealed it all up and sent it to us for a Valentine's Day present. It was caught at customs, who notified Scotland Yard, and Scotland Yard came round one day, very quietly, and busted eighteen of us—all the people that happened to be in the house. And while they were searching the house for two or three hours various friends turned up and they all got taken down too. The headlines were terrible, like 'Sixteen Year Old Unwed Mother-To-Be Involved In Rock Band Dope Bust'. It was just after The Rolling Stones bust and the city was a little hot, and it was a very touchy subject. One of the cats in the band was in fact married to a fifteen year old girl, and she was pregnant, but it was groovy, so it was just the sensational line the press made out of the whole thing. It looked like it could have been very serious; there were a couple of friends of ours who were junkies and they found hard narcotics—so it looked bad, possibly go to jail, not just deported. We had an excellent lawyer who cleaned it all up—you know "Dere good boys, didn't mean to shoot da police" so it was a £10 fine and we were out.

ZZ: What is this 'Lockhart Thing' alongside the leg of one of the musicians on the 'Sailor' cover?

BS: I don't know really. Maybe it was the name of the guy who designed it. It was a guy from Capital who put the sleeve together. It's a mystery to me.

ZZ: We have this image of San Francisco where it was regarded as totally amazing. Was it really like that?

BS: I wasn't around for that much of that period. It went on over a couple of years. The big explosion, or whatever it was, came from all over. It all came together in the summer of 1967, and that was the summer when it was all happening. I arrived on September 1st just after the summer was over. That was the apex of the whole scene, and from that point on the whole thing got

very exposed.

ZZ: For a working musician, what was it like?

BS: It was a very stimulating scene, there was so many musicians around, just millions of cats from all over. Everybody was writing, and it was always, "Got a new song today, we're gonna go sit in with so-and-so tonight. See you over at the Matrix, would you like to play with us tonight?" We worked like four nights a week or maybe even seven, because it was a total thing, a total working environment. It was serious, but fun and games. It totally baffled me. It was very productive and very healthy—no jive, no bullshit, everybody was working hard and working very well.

ZZ: What kind of deal did you get from Capitol?

BS: Well, Steve has a mind for business. The other bands were like "Oh a record deal, that's nice, where do I sign?" kind of happy go lucky. But Steve has always had an eye out for the possibilities of business. We also had a very sharp manager who was a friend of ours. So they took their time and negotiated possibly the first real modern record company contract where groups got like big guaranteed sums up front, other kinds of rights and benefits as far as control went. He was one of the first people to actually go into a record company and use it as a total vehicle to get something across.

ZZ: How do you remember The Charlantans, who are fairly legendary now?

BS: They were all just mad cats. Musically, none of them were really proficient. But they had such a good feel. They had a lot of style. They were into clothes and image which was something other bands were into, but not in the same way. They were much more stylised. Each one of them was a character. They were very entertaining and very popular in San Francisco. But through one thing and another, they never had anyone to take care of business for them.

ZZ: Can you recall any other bands from that era who were ignored, who were as good as The Charlantans?

BS: The Charlantans were just well loved, and well known. They were there at the beginning and they may have been the first band, I don't know. But I don't know what it was like before I got there. We're talking about the first year and a half when the Fillmore and the Avalon ballroom were going and that was pretty much a local thing—local acts, millions of bands. And after that, the ballrooms were stretching out a bit and Graham, or Chet Helms who ran the Avalon, started to bring in people like Clifton Chenier, and out of town bands, and then English bands started coming in, New York bands, black artists, and Chicago blues cats. So

When he was 15, Boz Scaggs met Steve Miller at a private school in Dallas, Texas. Miller had led numerous local bands since he was 12, and invited Boz to join his latest, The MARKSMEN, playing high school hops etc. Boz sang and played tambourine until Miller taught him to play rhythm guitar. In Summer 1961, Steve went off to the University of Wisconsin in Madison and Boz followed the following year, by which time Steve's newest band THE ARDELLS was fairly well established in the area. Boz joined (Ben Sidran was also in the band) and they played local gigs (sometimes as THE FABULOUS NIGHT TRAIN) doing a mixture of R&B and old rock numbers. After a few exam problems, Boz returned to Texas where he enrolled at the University in Austin, whilst Steve continued his musical career in Wisconsin, which at that time seems to have been full of interesting bands including the Chordaires (a cabaret type group containing Tim Davis and Curley Cooke.... see over there →) and Tracy Nelson & the Imitations.

This chart was researched and drawn by Pete Frame in July 1973 with grateful thanks for the assistance of Mick Houghton, Chet Flippo of Austin Texas, and that dynamic duo Andrew Lauder and Maureen, who opened up their amazing archives for my inspection. Unfortunately, however, this chart is a substantial mess - partly due to its hasty preparation to accompany the Boz Scaggs article, and will be entirely revised and redesigned when it appears in an anthology of family trees early next year.

THE WIGS.

Whilst at the University of Texas, Boz formed the WIGS, an R&B band which gigged at bars and local school functions and also nailed the lid on any further formal education. With the English group INVASION breaking loose, they decided to take their authentic blues to London, which they did in Jan 1964

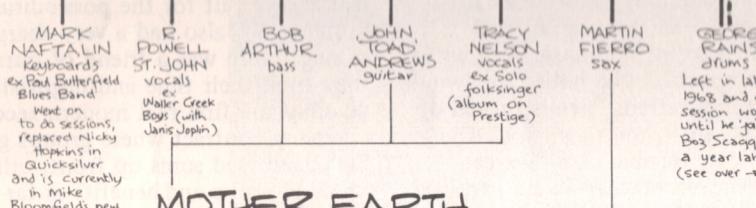


SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET PLUS TWO

Lasted from late 1964 - 1967. A Texas band #1 who went to Houston to record under Huey Meaux, they made 'She's about a mover' - a worldwide hit single. Their development as an early long-hair US group ran parallel to the Byrds but they couldn't sustain their success.

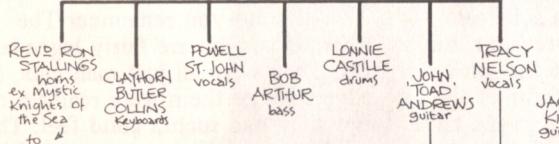
MOTHER EARTH #1

Another band which started out in Texas but moved to greener pastures of San Francisco in the mid Sixties. Contributed 3 tracks to 'REVOLUTION' United Artists UAS 5125 (Feb 68) and released first album: 'LIVING WITH THE ANIMALS' (Mercury SR 6108 (Nov 68))



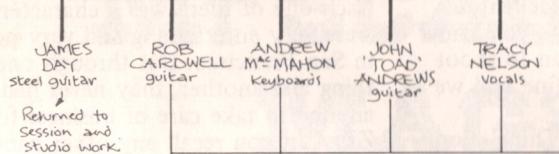
MOTHER EARTH

The San Francisco scene having burned itself out, they #2 moved to Nashville in mid 1968 and cut 2 albums: 'MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE' Mercury SR 61226 (Sept 69) and 'TRACY NELSON COUNTRY' SR 61230 (Nov 69)



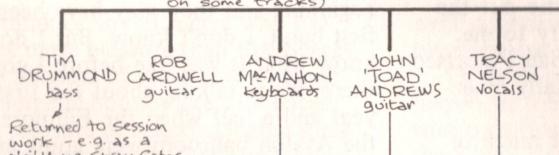
MOTHER EARTH #3

Recorded 'SATISFIED' - Mercury SR 61270 (October 1970) using Nashville session men



MOTHER EARTH #4

One album 'BRING ME HOME' Reprise RS 6431 (May 1971) (including Boz Scaggs on some tracks)



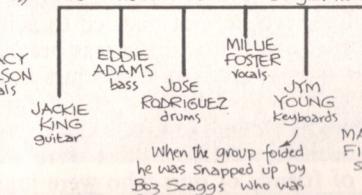
MOTHER EARTH #5

Albums: 'MOTHER EARTH / TRACY NELSON' Reprise MS 2054 (May 1972) 'TRACY NELSON: POOR MANS PARADISE' CBS KC 31759 (April 1973)



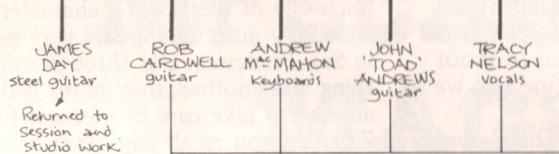
SHADES OF JOY

Two albums: 'SHADES OF JOY' Mercury SRF 67592 and 'MUSIC FROM EL TOPO' Douglas Records



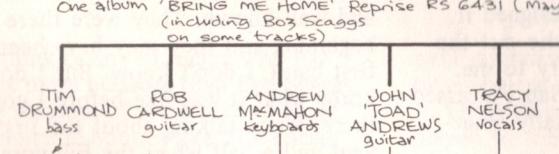
MOTHER EARTH #6

Recorded 'SATISFIED' - Mercury SR 61270 (October 1970) using Nashville session men



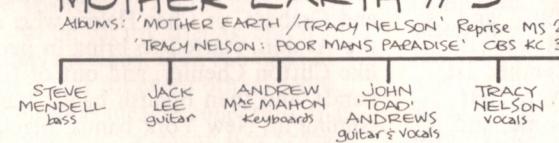
MOTHER EARTH #7

One album 'BRING ME HOME' Reprise RS 6431 (May 1971) (including Boz Scaggs on some tracks)



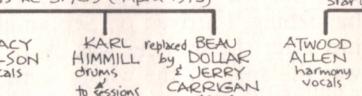
MOTHER EARTH #8

Albums: 'MOTHER EARTH / TRACY NELSON' Reprise MS 2054 (May 1972) 'TRACY NELSON: POOR MANS PARADISE' CBS KC 31759 (April 1973)



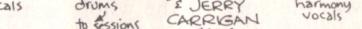
DOUG SAHM & BAND

Late 1972 to now. After signing with Atlantic and recording an album which included vocal & instrumental & songwriting contributions from Bob Dylan, Doug Sahm has seemingly been accorded a new lease of life, surrounded by much publicity - though he's still in trouble with the Texas police (a belligerent bunch of assholes). The album 'DOUG SAHM AND BAND' Atlantic SD 7254 (January 1973), as well as featuring "star guests" like Dylan, Dr. John, David Bromberg, etc., has contributions from old friends Fierro and Mel Martin.



SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET #1

Lasted from late 1964 - 1967. A Texas band #1 who went to Houston to record under Huey Meaux, they made 'She's about a mover' - a worldwide hit single. Their development as an early long-hair US group ran parallel to the Byrds but they couldn't sustain their success.



SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET #2

Made only one album: 'THE BEST OF THE SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET' Tribe 47001 (Aug 1968)



SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET #3

Late 1968 to Dec 1970, MENDOCINO TOGETHER AFTER FIVE Smash SRS 67115 (April 1969) (including those marked * as session men), '1 + 1 + 1 = 4' Phillips 600 144 (Sept 70),

EL QUINTET #1

September 1971 -

Stayed on the Coast after Sir Doug returned to Texas, and signed with United Artists. Byron Farlow had done an album with the Quintet as 'BIG GUITAR SONNY & THE EL PASO RAMBLERS' produced by Doug Sahm. One album: 'FUTURE TENSE' UAS 5514 (Dec 1971)

Two albums: 'SHADES OF JOY' Mercury SRF 67592 and 'MUSIC FROM EL TOPO' Douglas Records

Lineup for EL Quintet #1: MARTIN FIERRO sax, GEORGE RAINS drums, ATWOOD ALLEN vocals & guitar, WHITNEY HERSHEY FREEMAN bass, FRANK MORIN sax, JOHN PEREZ drums, HARVEY KAGAN bass replaced by JIM STALLINGS bass, AUGIE MEYER keyboards, DOUG SAHM guitar & fiddle.

Left in late 1968 and did session work until he joined Boz Scaggs a year later (see over →)

became a studio musician and is now back with the Doug Sahm Band

Left in late 1968 and did session work until he joined Boz Scaggs a year later (see over →)

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we were doing. And they broke into a little boogaloo, and the little boogaloo broke into a slow shuffle and the slow shuffle turned into a swinging shuffle and they just went right on. And Duane started soloing, and Barry Beckett started soloing and they just took it from there. Rarely do they come back in to listen to the playbacks, I mean those guys have been in the studio for years and they don't have to go back into the room to listen, they know what they've played. But they came in to hear what they'd played. And while they were listening to it they were looking at each other and going, "God, man" and grinning at each other. The first time we did it it lasted 25 minutes, and everyone thought it was such a gas that they tramped back in and did it again, and it ended up with about 40 minutes of 'Loan Me A Dime' and we wanted to use at least 20 minutes of it, but we had to use the shorter version, but that music is in the can somewhere in Muscle Shoals, and Duane was really rockin' out.

ZZ: He was a fantastic musician because among other things he would fill out a number, rather than dominate it.

BS: Oh absolutely. Any great musician's strength is his ability to play with other musicians, to support them. That, number one, and it's a quality that's there in all great music. And number two, he grew up a lot in Muscle Shoals as a session man, at The Rick Hall (also known as Fame) Studios, playing with other session musicians, and that's the way they play, very clean and very laid back.

They're in the studio every day for hours and hours, they have this tremendous amount of experience, and Duane had that. When you play in a studio you have to change your style to fit in, you have to be very versatile, and every note has got to be played perfectly and that's how he could play so well.

ZZ: Were you aware that you'd made such amazing music?

BS: We didn't know what we'd get really, because we'd put a lot of elements in and at the end we weren't too sure what we had, but we liked it. It all happened so fast. Bang! We had the album in our hands. It didn't get too much promotion and most of the people who got it, were friends, and they liked it, so that pleased us, that gave it a real kick.

ZZ: Has anyone ever recorded, say, 'I'll Be Long Gone', because, by any standards it's a beautiful song.

BS: That particular song was recorded by Cissy Drinker. I was going through the south checking out all the studios—Nashville, Memphis, Muscle Shoals, and Macon, and when I got the studios in MS, The Sweet Inspirations were there doing an album, and Cissy Drinker was there and I played it for her in another studio, and Tom Dowd was producing them, and they liked it and did it, so they were really the first to do it, but it was never on an album, because they didn't use it.

ZZ: What about some of your other songs?

BS: Well that's really down to the music publisher. You submit a lot of material—demos, and lead sheets and they

send them around to specific producers and artists—well that's the way it should be done, but I've never done that. It's not a deliberate thing. I've never had time to do it, to keep my eye on the publishing side of things. Writing songs is how I earn a living, but that part of it I can't see as a business per se, you know, pushing tunes. Other people have done my songs, but not because there was someone pushing them—Tracy Nelson did 'I'll Be Long Gone', and a new group called Blood has just done it. And also a black gospel group in Detroit, called The Vance Allan Group have done it.

ZZ: What was their version like?

BS: It was really funny, funny as hell. They're basically a gospel group, and I think they should be popular over here soon. But he takes these songs that he hears—really obscure material, and he changes the words around and gives them a Christian message. That's what he did with 'I'll Be Long Gone', he changed it to give it a religious meaning. And it said written by Vance Allan, but we straightened it out very easily. But I've really lost out on that side. When I left, Mary Travis wanted to do 'I'll Be Long Gone' and 'We Were Always Sweethearts' and I was to send lead sheets, but somehow I just didn't get it together.

ZZ: What was Jann Wenner's role on that album?

BS: Well he just helped me to get the whole thing together. I'm a great procrastinator. Jann just has a way of pushing, you know. "Do you have a song ready for me I'd like to hear it?" and

rather than a local thing it became a total entertainment outlet. By that time Jefferson Airplane were major stars. The Dead were a major San Francisco act, and Steve Miller was big. So whenever one of those bands was in town,

they'd be a strong, heavy headliner, but in other cases they would rely on someone like Van Morrison, or Chuck Berry, or The Band.

ZZ: So you left Steve Miller. Was it like it was described in Rolling Stone 80?

BS: Yeah, that's right. It wasn't a band; which is why I became a bit disenchanted working in it. I didn't play on any of Steve's songs and on my songs, Steve didn't even bother to come into the studio.

Muscle Shoals

Boz finally left The Steve Miller Band in September 1968 and played around San Francisco in places like The Stardust Lounge on the corner of Hayes and Laguna, which was a small black R'n'B bar, but had met his next door neighbour, Jann Wenner, who had just started up Rolling Stone magazine. Eventually their friendship turned to the possibility of making a record together, and before Boz knew where he was, he was signed to Atlantic Records, and in April 1969, they headed for Muscle Shoals, Alabama. That album is probably my favourite record—it exudes an unselfconscious warmth and beauty from every track, and you can actually share the musician's delight in each other, and in the music that they are making, an altogether fabulous record.

ZZ: What made you pick the Jimmie Rodgers song 'Waiting For A Train'?

BS: Jimmy Johnson—one of the guitarists—came up to me in the studio with this single. And he'd been a Jimmie Rodgers freak for years, a real follower of Jimmie Rodgers, and he just brought this song along. And he was so sweet. He's really modest, and he was very shy about telling me about it. He said real quiet, "I really love your songs and I love what we're doing, man," and he was really apologetic while he was saying this, and he went on, "I really think it would be a gas to do it, just like it is on the record, I think your voice is great for this song". I mean, it was all his idea to do it. And we got hold of this cat at the barber shop to play his fiddle and Duane had his dobro, in fact he had a hell of a lot of dobros, and everybody got right into it.

ZZ: Now I understand that there's a bit of a story behind Duane and his dobros.

BS: Oh yeah. Well, this was a little bit after the album—about four or five months. I went back to the south, to Macon, just to visit people that I'd met there, and I just told my girlfriend to pack up a few suitcases, and we'd stay for a bit. And it was just when the Allmans were getting together. Now I was playing with a few friends of mine called Mother Earth, at weekends and things. Somehow or other, I knew all the people in the band from different sources. Tracy Nelson I was real friends with. And there was this cat up there in Nashville who just travels around—and he's a really famous guy. I mean Tracy has got this most fabulous collection of steels and dobros, he's got everything, and he told me about this cat. And when I went back to Macon I told Duane about it, and he wanted to check it out, because he didn't actually own a dobro at the time. So he and his wife, and myself drove up to Nashville to get the lowdown on this guy. He was living in this little dingy apart-

ment building, that he'd just taken temporarily and he had more dobros than you thought existed. Man, he had dobros stacked against the wall up to the ceiling; I mean, there was hardly any furniture, just dobros everywhere, and it was a really shitty apartment.

ZZ: Had you written the material?

BS: I'd written some and I had a pretty good idea what we wanted. We did two other songs that weren't on the album. It was all finalised in the studio, but I'd done a few demos of stuff.

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ment building, that he'd just taken temporarily and he had more dobros than you thought existed. Man, he had dobros stacked against the wall up to the ceiling; I mean, there was hardly any furniture, just dobros everywhere, and it was a really shitty apartment, covered in dobros. Every sort that you could imagine—laid, pearl inlaid, gold inlays, gold plated. His hobby was just dobros, it was also his livelihood. He also had all these snakes, and there was like boa constrictors and rattlesnakes crawling all over the place, and this big dirty aquarium tank full of snakes, and he fed them live mice. A very weird cat. He was a Harvard graduate who'd gone off a bit. Anyway Duane tried them all, and he found this perfect one, just what he'd always wanted. It was more money that he could afford, but it was too good to miss, so he took it.

ZZ: You had to put him in the toilet during 'Loan Me A Dime' didn't you?

BS: That track was one of the only tracks where we had all the musicians in the studio at the same time, where they were all blowing away. We had five horn players, and the whole rhythm section and Duane's style—the way he gets his sound—is to wind up that energy level, and he sounds really loud. Now the other cats use tiny little Fender amps, that's just the way they play. And they freaked when old Duane cranked his guitar up, so we had to move him into the other room otherwise he would have filled up the whole room and his stuff would have leaked onto all the other tracks. So we put Duane's amplifier in the bathroom, no actually we put Duane himself into the toilet which was only about as big as this table—3 by 3. And he was crammed in there with his headset and amp, and just wailed away. And man he played....wheeeew.

ZZ: Was the other guitarist on 'Loan Me A Dime' you?

BS: No, Duane.

ZZ: It sounds like there's a bit of lick trading going on there.

BS: That was Eddie Hinton and Duane.

ZZ: I remember when you were over here a couple of years ago you told me that that track was a jam, and that it was a very rare thing to hear those Muscle Shoals cats do that.

BS: We came to the end of the number and they knew that they were going to do it. The drummer, Roger Hawkins, said "Let's break into a slow boogaloo, and play out the chords and just have a jam," and we were going to let it just fade out, like just a sniff of what



I'll say "Sort of, but I don't have all the words yet, there's one chorus that still needs to be done," and he'll go, "Well sit down and here's some paper and a pen, just sit down and do it, write it now, and when you've done that we'll get some musicians together and go into the studio, and make a demo, and have a listen to it." Or he'll come in and say "We've got to listen to them all tonight. We're going to use Muscle Shoals, and we're going to listen to them all, and pick the guys we like—and we're going to do it tonight," and somehow we do it. He's a producer in the sense that he's like a film producer, he takes all the elements and makes all the arrangements.

ZZ: Is the M.S.S. Horns credited on the 'My Time' sleeve the same as the guys on the early album?
BS: No, one of them is. Ben Cauley on trumpet was the head of the section that we used for 'My Time'.
ZZ: What about the two girls that we don't know about? Jeannie Greene is on Elektra now. Donna Thatcher is in the Dead. What about Sue Pilkington and Mary Holliday?
BS: Mary Holliday is around Muscle Shoals. She lives in Memphis, and she plays around there. Sue Pilkington wasn't actually on the record—that's the only existing photograph of all the other chicks, and she happens to be in it.
ZZ: And the other guys?

BS: Well Eddie Hinton, besides being an amazing guitar player is a fantastic songwriter and singer. He made an album which Atlantic didn't release, last year, and it's great. He's half Paul McCartney and half Burt Bacharach, and he sings like Joe Cocker and Ray Charles. He went to Nashville to do it and he's in Nashville now. The rest of the cats are still there. They still live there and come over for the Traffic gigs. At this stage in your reading, I am going to call a coffee break, and urge you to listen to 'I'll Be Long Gone' simply because I couldn't begin to describe how beautiful it is, but a listen will remind you.

London

The next album Boz made was 'Moments' for CBS, and although it has that Scaggs seal of wholesome goodness, I've always thought that it lacked the joyousness of all his other works, not that that opinion is worth more than a two-yen note.

ZZ: What happened to the Atlantic album? Did it sell?

BS: No it didn't. After we finished it, I had some bread, so I stayed down there just hanging around and doing some work, but not too much, and so I was rather out of it. I didn't even know that it had been released. In fact it's sold more in the last month than in its entire previous period of release, because of 'Moments'. [Note: this is part of an interview done over here during the recording of Boz Scaggs and Band.] It got a lot of FM play and was a very popular album with those sort of people, but it never reached the mass audience.

ZZ: Why the move to CBS?

BS: It finally came down to CBS and one other major concern. I think that for every artist there is a right label, and from the very first contact that I had with CBS, it was a gas—they wanted to do what we wanted to do, and when we finished 'Moments', we'd been touring a lot and I'd met a lot of CBS people, and they're all a gas. The Atlantic album sold less than twenty thousand first time around, and CBS sold 120,000 just like that—I feel that they can sell an album better than anyone. They are very straightforward about it, that is their job. Atlantic are very cool people, they'll come to listen and run around with you and they get along with their artists very well, but CBS can sell.

ZZ: How did you come to form that band?

BS: Well—I was living in the South, and towards the end of 1969, George Rains, and I, who had been friends for some years, decided to go ahead, and do it on our own. We went to Texas and looked for some musicians to take back to the

coast with us and we got a guitar player, Doug Simril. And we got another two musicians from Florida through recommendations from Duane because they used to be with Duane's original band, and the five of us went to California, and we rehearsed for a week and then started to play in San Francisco and we worked five nights a week—this was in January 1970—and we've worked five nights ever since. As a result the band developed very quickly, because three months after that we could add three horns, but they weren't stable, but it became stable just when we started to record 'Moments'. Jim Young playing organ and the three new horn players, and from that time the band has been set.

ZZ: Where did you get hold of John McFee on steel?

BS: He's in a little country band out in the country. We tried to get him to join, but he preferred to stay where he was.

ZZ: So the band was exactly as in the picture on the 'Moments' album?

BS: Exactly.

ZZ: What about the cover of 'Moments'?

BS: An acquaintance of mine—an amateur photographer—has one special shot that he takes. He does this thing where he gets very soft textures and superimposes these clouds, because he has a friend who's a pilot and they fly up and shoot clouds. It really knocks me out, but he couldn't take a picture of that bottle there. And CBS blew up when they got the bill from this cat, because he has no concept of what was a reasonable fee, and CBS have a fixed fee for album sleeves. But he charged the aircraft charter, and special colour processes and everything. CBS finally agreed but said never again.

ZZ: You made 'Moments' at Wally Heiders', but you mixed it at Island, was that just because of Glyn Johns?
BS: Yes, he's very good. CBS has a very old union agreement that only CBS engineers can work in CBS studios, and we have to use CBS' studios, so

we couldn't have used Glyn in the States, and it all works out about the same in terms of the money, and anyway we needed a vacation.

ZZ: What about the instrumental track on 'Moments'—'Can I Make It Last (Or Will It Just Be Over)'? Did you simply give up trying to get lyrics or was it meant to be an instrumental?

BS: I had the title. And I had that little simple riff and it had that effect on it. And when we came to listen to the track after we'd done it, it just seemed pointless to put words on. The title said what the music was about and echoed what the music said. We tried to cut the whole album more or less live. It worked when we recorded like that in Muscle Shoals—instead of putting bass on one track and then adding horns, and chicks and a voice after—we did that with 'Loan Me A Dime', 'I'll Be Long Gone', and 'Sweet Release'.

ZZ: How do you do arrangements, Pat O'Hara is credited on 'Moments'....?

BS: Well I work on it too. I love that full sound type of music. Using a lot of different things to fill out the sound. Not a whole album, but just the few tracks that lend themselves to it.

ZZ: How did Rita Coolidge come to be on 'Moments'?

BS: She was one of the girls. The chick who got the girls together was Dorothy Morrison, and Rita got one other girl, and Dorothy got the rest.

'Moments' had considerable success in The States, but Boz decided to make his next album, 'Boz Scaggs And His Band' in London. And last year he produced 'My Time', to my mind, his best album for Columbia. We pick up the conversation for some general ruminations about those two records.

ZZ: Do you think at all about the differences in the American market and the European market?

BS: No not really, though maybe I am with this album, because I want to make a very stylised album, a very lyrical album, and London to me is

much more style conscious than any other city in the world, that's why I come here. I just get that fix of being in London. Actually that's what I was trying to do with the 'Boz Scaggs And His Band' album—I wanted to bring them over here and get that same flash from London that I get off it—and we'd be able to harness that on the album, but it didn't work completely that way, because they got such a flash off London that they were completely destroyed as far as the music went—their main interest came from being in London, and doing things in London. When we did 'Children Of The Future' it had the complete opposite effect—everybody in the band was into the music and London was just a good place to get flashes and new ideas, and just draw on the sort of exotic mood that you get into from being in a strange place. London has a special way of reacting to artists—I'm not talking about the Top Of The Pops market, that Slade sort of thing, but the way they take in someone like Randy Newman or Feliciano—sort of take in and cherish. If I could be accepted in London in that way, that would mean more to me than being popular in New York or most any other place.

ZZ: How did Clive contribute to Boz Scaggs and Band?

BS: It's hard to say. I've rarely written songs with anyone else, so there must be something special there.

ZZ: Now Jim was the one that stayed on with you after 'Boz Scaggs And His Band'?

BS: Well, he stayed for all the reasons—the bread, and he likes to travel and he likes to sing. But his other offers were basically jazz oriented, and his interests go from one extreme to another. He can play all styles and he's influenced my music because working with him I know that I can get into anything. I've got some stuff here that would take your head off. We played Berkeley about a month ago, and we recorded two nights live and you wouldn't believe what he does—synthesizer and clavinet. I turned him on to Stevie Wonder when 'Music Of My Mind' came out, and he thought, "Oh, Motown, it's bound to be the same old trash" and the first time I'd heard it I loved it, and I'd been at home trying to figure out the chord changes, and in the middle of recording the album I started playing all these Stevie Wonder changes, but not quite right, and he would come up to me and say "Man where did you learn all that incredible stuff?" and I told him they were Stevie Wonder, and he went out and got the album and when we went into the studio, he was the one with all the Stevie Wonder licks and he had to have the clavinet and the wah-wah pedal. And Santana happened to be recording in the studio and had left their stuff there, and they had it all.

ZZ: You once mentioned Curtis Mayfield and the Gamble-Huff productions, because you liked the multi-layered

textures and sounds. Did you accomplish that on 'My Time'?

BS: No, I tried, but I'm still looking for it. All that Tommy Bell stuff, have you heard the new Ronnie Ellsmith album—wheeeew!

ZZ: Yeah.....wheeeew!

BS: The side one that Tommy Bell wrote and produced. Wow.

ZZ: There are a couple of tracks on 'My Time' where I think you got that layered feel.

BS: Yeah. That's as far as I got with it.

ZZ: When you were over here recording the 'Boz Scaggs And His Band' album, you told me that you were trying to get a live studio sound—a one-take kind of thing. Did you get that feel on 'Flames Of Love'?

BS: No. Actually that was recorded for

the 'Moments' album. That was just an old track that we had around in San Francisco, and Chepito and Mike Sirella of Santana came over and we jammed a rhythm track and we finished it off.

ZZ: Can you tell us how the falsetto voice that begins 'He's A Fool For You' developed?

BS: I first used it on the 'Moments' album—and that's another Curtis Mayfield influence—just a sweet Philadelphia thing.

ZZ: Now you do a lot of your lyrics very late in the day in the studio, don't you?

BS: Right. When I'm supposed to be recording, I just keep putting it off. On 'Dime A Dance Romance' I hadn't done the words and they were really getting desperate for them, so they sent me out to the bar and told me to get really drunk and not to come back until it had been



done. So I went down and got really drunk, and scribbled a bunch of shit down, and when I went back to the studio I screamed out all the lines from the top of my head, whatever lines I could read at the time. I'm trying to get out of that habit, because you spend so much time worrying, getting the lyrics done at the last moment, and that is the time that you should spend doing the music.

ZZ: When we had a meal with you last year you played a track from 'Boz Scaggs And His Band' that had some lyrics on it, even though it was a rough collection of bits of tapes. How would you add words to that?

BS: Well, if you listen to the music the music will suggest an idea, and the lyrics will just come out of it. On the 'My Time' album, 'Might Have To Cry' and 'Dinah Flo' were written as they played it. They all said, "We have the chords, you have the lyrics" so they started to play and told me to sit on the stool and take the microphone. I listened to them playing and then sang the words. There was never anything written down.

ZZ: Now what about this legendary Berkeley gig with thirty musicians on the stage?

BS: That was going to be our first gig, and we wanted to do something special for San Francisco. I had all the string parts from when we'd done it in the studio, and although I wasn't planning to take anything extra on the road, it just started out with a few chicks—Dorothy Morrison, and some of the other girls who'd done background for me—and then I thought I'd check out what Pete and Coke Escovedo were doing that night, and they were free, so that was a bit more. They were on the album so they knew the arrangements. So then I called up the string arranger, found out how much it would cost me for a string section and got him, and we needed an extra keyboard player and I just happened to be trying out keyboard players to go on the road with me. So it just grew, but besides doing something special for the audience it was a bit selfish because I'd wanted to do something like that, since I knew that it would just knock me out. It took about two weeks of rehearsals every day to get it together. We'd do the girls in the afternoon, and then the rhythm section in the evening and so on. Tracy Nelson was coming out with just her guitar player and her keyboard player,

so we had to get a set together for her, and right up till the show we'd never been on stage at the same time together, until the sound check in the afternoon, but even then there were guys missing because of recording sessions and so forth. The actual concert was pretty loose—I had a sort of plan. Tracy was going to come out and do a couple of numbers and then I would come out with the band, and then we'd do a few, then the horn players, and then we'd do a number with Tracy, with the band as her backing, and the idea was to gradually accumulate everything on the stage.

ZZ: Ralph Gleason in Rolling Stone talked about you feeling it necessary to give something more than a performance.

BS: Well I paid to do that gig. It sold out, and I still lost money. I wanted it to be a great show because San Francisco has always supported me. All along—they started me, they sustained me—it's just my favourite audience.

ZZ: Would you like to do it again?

BS: Oh sure. But it would have to be like eight or nine cities over two weeks, otherwise I couldn't afford it. I'd love to do it over here too.

Aspen & Tomorrow The World

ZZ: Can you tell me a bit about Aspen where you got married because it seems to be a fairly nice place?

BS: It is. I don't know too much about it really. I only started skiing last winter, I went up with Jann and his wife and my girlfriend Carmella, and while I was up there I met Hunter.

[Hunter Thompson, whose articles on the American Presidential elections established him as probably the best writer in America at the moment—in the tradition of Hemmingway and Mailer—fantastic work. I think John Peel even voted him his top writer in some poll, whereas all the rest were voting for parvenu scribes like Richard Williams and Charles 'The Sham' Murray.] And Hunter and I have the same attorney.

ZZ: Not the famous personal attorney that was in Las Vegas with him?

BS: No, that's Oscar. But Aspen is just a small town that is descended upon by tourists and skiers every year. The townspeople keep pretty much to themselves, and the town is run by heads who are the waitresses, and the ski instructors, and drive the buses and taxis and so on. And in the summer they have a whole different set of things going on—art centres and seminars and symposiums—a lot of famous cultural events. So the three sets of people that go to Aspen kind of coexist, but the freaks are in the majority. And in Aspen there is more drugs than I've

seen anywhere else in the world—every kind of stuff that you can imagine—but any place else would explode under these circumstances, but Aspen has this little bit of magic running through the place that keeps it a real nice place—no paranoia, no fighting, it's just lots of fun and lots of laughs.

ZZ: How has all this Clive Davis stuff affected you personally?

BS: Nobody is taking decisions. I've got all my musicians waiting to come over. My wife is waiting, and we've got people waiting to take our house. We've booked the studio time—it's all waiting for one specific decision. I don't know Clive Davis that well, but with him he makes the decision quickly and there's no ifs and buts with him; and I'd had a meeting with Clive on this very subject—exactly what I was going to do, and exactly what direction I was going in, and he understands that because although he hasn't got a musical mind he knows all my albums and can understand what I'm talking about, and he dug what I was planning and we agreed very specifically about budgets. In the past when that has happened, I'd call up the head of A&R and say that I was going to start recording next week and he'd say that I was going to start recording next week and send in the budget which Clive had already agreed, and he'd then give me the project number, and I was in business—and I'd

start working. But now after coming over to set things up and ready to go—I've got all the musicians ready, and so I call up Los Angeles, and they give me all this bullshit—"Come into the office with your guitar and sing us some of your songs"—they're obviously very paranoid and cautious. There was one guy—a major Columbia artist who was in the studio when Clive was fired, and during the hectic couple of weeks that followed the firing, musicians were actually called up at the studio in the middle of recording and told to get out of the studio—major artists. The idea behind it being the feeling that they didn't know what was happening and they didn't want any fooling around, so they stopped them. Just like that, and they would talk to them and find out if any money was being wasted. Really outrageous events. And it's only now that it's becoming clear what everyone there is doing, and who is responsible for what.

As we were finishing the conversation Boz explained that he had to phone up CBS, and their decision was that he would have to return to San Francisco until it had all been sorted out. So he left and hopes to return later this summer with his band, when he plans to complete his album and do some work over here, so keep your eyes peeled for the dates, because they'll be great.

Connor/Mike Haines



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BROW

If the rigid chronology of whim remains an accurate barometer, the next contender on the fickle sliding scale of nostalgia is almost certain to be flowerpower, with 'Itchicoo Park' returning to delight enthusiasts of phasing and Pan's People lurching in fish-eye lens slow motion across fields of iridescent long grass.

The more committed aspects of this era have already been documented in this magazine, but just as significant was the utter crassness of the periphery. The music paper which most effectively reflected this at the time was Disc which, between advertisements boasting Authentic San Francisco Bells with double exclamation marks from Hounslow, once featured one of those incalculably moronic 101-ways-to-teach-yourself-superficiality guides which posed the deathless question Are You A Beautiful Person? beside a photograph of Paul McCartney and Jane Asher looking rather bored and not very beautiful. According to this feast of erudition, you were a beautiful person if you liked Tolkien, children, spiders, old ladies, nature and incense (no mention of that nasty Lysogenic Acid). You weren't if you slept soundlessly, didn't like the rain because it made your hair go frizzy, wanted to deport immigrants, played Little Richard records loudly and told policemen to bugger off.

Another curious phenomenon was the Toyland School of Songwriting, exemplified by, amongst others, Traffic's 'Hole In My Shoe' and 'House For Everyone', Keith West's 'Excerpt From A

Teenage Opera', The Alan Bown's 'Toyland' and Tomorrow's 'My White Bicycle'—in fact, most of Tomorrow's subsequent LP rejoiced in titles like 'Auntie Mary's Dress Shop' and 'Three Jolly Little Dwarfs'.

Undoubtedly the precursor of this style, and its most effective exponent, was Syd Barrett, right from those memorable first bars of 'See Emily Play' ('Emily tries but misunderstands aoooo')—'Arnold Layne' is too overtly sinister to qualify. What Barrett brought to his childlike rhymes and ruminations, and what distinguishes him from lesser practitioners peddling psychedelic Enid Blyton, was a complete authenticity, a genuine sense of absurdism and an aura of mystery emphasised by his flat English enunciation, qualities well in evidence on three songs from the first Pink Floyd album: 'Matilda Mother', 'The Gnome' and 'Bike'.

A feature they have in common, apart from Barrett's formidable presence, is an abrupt change in mood, often lasting for no more than a line or two, after a verse has set the scene. In 'Matilda Mother', a song about a small boy captivated by ancient tales ('And fairy stories held me high/on clouds of sunlight floating by'), the first verse, which is in effect part of a story he's being read, is followed by a creepily elongated 'Oh mother, tell me more'. In 'The Gnome', an engaging piece of hobbitry, he suddenly interposes, with a breathless sense of wonderment, 'Look at the sky/look at the river/isn't it good?' And on 'Bike', whose verses deal,

in turn, with a bike, a cloak, a mouse called Gerald, a dish of gingerbread men and a clockwork room of musical tunes, followed by a tape loop of duck calls, the recurring punctuation mark is 'You're the kind of girl/that fits in with my world/I'll give you anything everything/if you want things'. The other emphasis is on clothes, a favourite flowerpower fetish, with reference to colour and general appearance. 'Across the stream with wooden shoes' in 'Matilda Mother' becomes 'He wore a scarlet tunic/a blue-green hood/it looked quite good' in 'The Gnome' and 'I've got a cloak/it's a bit of a joke/there's a tear up the front/it's red and black/I've had it for months' in 'Bike'.

After Syd Barrett left the group, his successor in spirit, for a time at any rate, was Rick Wright, except that where in Barrett's world anything was possible, Wright perceives the dark clouds overhead. 'Remember A Day', 'Seesaw' (both on 'Saucerful Of Secrets') and 'Summer 68' ('Atom Heart Mother') are all songs which wish things were otherwise.

'Remember A Day' is a lament for lost innocence and that sense of credulity which Barrett characterised. Over a weeping guitar and strident piano, a mist-enshrouded voice sings 'Remember a day before today/a day when we were young/free to play along with time'. And the two breaks from the main verse structure are filled with inquisitive sadness: 'Why can't we play today?/why can't we stay that way?' and 'Why can't we reach the sun?/why can't we blow the years away?'

'Seesaw' features mournful, indistinct vocals over a floatingly tranquil waltz-time melody, conveying the impression of a dream going sour. 'She goes up while he goes down' sings a voice very similar to Barrett's. It is difficult to ascertain whether he was involved in the making of these tracks, although according to the cover of 'Relics', 'Remember A Day' was recorded a fortnight before 'See Emily Play' but did not appear until the release of the second album a year later, by which time David Gilmour was the Floyd's guitarist.

'Summer 68', although more closely rooted in day-to-day reality, shows an equally baffled dissatisfaction at the shallowness of necessarily transient relationships. A melancholy, resigned song of parting between a musician and a girl, the piano and acoustic guitar of the verse explodes into a change of tempo followed by Beach Boys harmonies and a heroic brass arrangement in perfect congruity with the elegant structure of the tune. 'Tomorrow brings another town/another girl like you/have you time before I leave/to greet another man'. It is one of their most perfectly realised songs.

In retrospect, those are probably my six favourite Pink Floyd tracks of all time, preferable to the protracted epics and, in their own way, infinitely more explicit than the vacuous flatulence of 'Dark Side Of The Moon'. In fact, most of the group's recent work, while undoubtedly impressive, possesses all the conviction of a golf ball landing in a quicksand.

Al Clark





By Michael Wale

I've been social surfing in L.A. What's social surfing? Well, it's something that I invented that takes a large vodka and four Valium before you hit the first wave on the wall to wall carpeting, or the plastic grass beside the Hyatt House pool, where all the British stars and would-be groovers hang out, 20 floors above Sunset Strip. I wish I had a pool on the top of my Shepherds Bush penthouse!

I went over there basically to see what Zeppelin really were like on tour, which meant flying up to San Francisco with them and seeing them perform before 53,000 people, a rather relaxed if chilly afternoon, warmed—if that is the word, which I'm sure it isn't—by Bill Graham's hospitality. Graham used to run the Fillmores East and West and as such was responsible for breaking many a British group in America. He would also put on

highly varying bills, which people here, and there, come to that, seem too nervous to do these days. That is until I made my first visit to that hallowed Frame shrine, Friars at Aylesbury, where Dave Stops booked Peter Hammill to appear between Zox and the Radar Boys and Jack The Lad, a bold move, rewarded by the front of the audience who stamped for more. Who are Zox and the Radar Boys? They're a result of the growing boredom of rock stars who spend all their time rehearsing and recording and comparatively little time before an audience. Hiding behind this pow-zoom-splat title were among others Genesis drummer Phil Collins and ex-Yes, now Flash guitarist Pete Banks. So when you see mysterious posters with this mysterious name go along and catch them.

Before I went to L.A. I'd been down to talk to Rod Stewart. He didn't really want to talk at all. He was going through one of his 'down' days. He'd been out the night before and was paying for it, but he poured the tea steadily enough and ate a chocolate Penguin, so we talked about the past.

"I was a Secondary Modern school idiot." There is an old-time record on the stereo. Rod admits: "I always had a liking for Al Jolson, I had it rammed down my throat when I was a kid, the Inkspots as well."

He was first heard singing on Twickenham railway station by Long John Baldry. Until then he'd been a beatnik, part of the Ban the Bomb movement, and had come

to music through hearing the Stones on Eel Pie Island: "John Baldry approached me and said he'd get in touch. I didn't hear any more and a week later I joined The Dimensions. I didn't know I had any sort of voice. They used to let me play the harmonica on one number and do backing vocals on another. We covered Beatles songs, the group was semi-pro and I'd be 19 at the time. We got our big break through the Stones. They were due to go on tour and were playing at the Ken Colyer Jazz Club in Great Newport Street. They needed a replacement and we were it. When we arrived there the place was packed out to see the Stones. I lost all my friends that night. We played 'Please Please Me', 'Twist And Shout', things like that.

"Meanwhile Cyril Davis had died and John had taken over his band. He brought me in as second singer at £33 a week. It was a good wage then. That group became the Hoochie Coochie Men with Cliff Barton, who has died since, Geoff Bradford on guitar, Ernest O'Mally from the Clyde Valley Stompers.

"With the trad thing ending they'd all been out of work, but they were still brilliant musicians. I couldn't even sing a 12-bar, I had a terrible black voice. They were all old guys in their thirties and forties. That went on for two years. John was on the brink of being an enormous star, he was in the Beatles TV show. I only knew three numbers. I couldn't talk to an audience in those days. Then one night John was an hour and a half late at Portsmouth. When he turned up I said 'You **** Baldry,' and he sacked me. I cried, I wasn't too amused. I really was disillusioned, I didn't think people got sacked in show business. John didn't quite become the star he was going to become. He came back to me later and said 'How about getting a band together,' and he'd found this bird who worked in the Yardbirds' office and her name was Julie Driscoll. That was the beginning of Steam Packet and the Brian Auger Trinity. It was a good band, we did numbers like 'The Midnight Hour', 'Mr Pitiful', nothing original. I had four

numbers on my own, one with Julie and one with Brian, then we had one all together. In the end it folded up, the whole band couldn't record together because they were all with different labels. I was unemployed for about seven or eight months, then I found the Jeff Beck Group. He had been unemployed and so had Ronnie Wood, who was on bass. It was a very big break for me joining that band, simply because I got to America. I found on reaching America that the American audience took to me. I wasn't writing by then, just nicking everybody else's things. We did contemporary blues, and we did some good numbers, although I never thought of myself as being a blues singer. We used to do three or so months there at a time. We had a bit of a complex about this side, we thought no-one wanted to listen to us, which proves how wrong you can be. We broke up and within months the Small Faces broke up probably for the same reasons, that the person leading the band was too much into his own publicity. I used to go down to the Stones studio in Bermondsey and listen to them rehearsing, and then I'd run off. It took nine years to get into a band where everybody is getting on and not cutting each other's throats."

Looking back, Rod reckoned that he didn't really think his career started until three years ago: "That's when I made my first solo album. Until then I was a lazy bastard. Jagger got me a great song by Wilson Pickett, I sang it with P.P. Arnold but I was my own worst enemy."

Once he started writing he didn't stop although it never comes easily: "With 'Maggie May' I just sat down and wrote the words to the music. I always do it that way, it's a true story about a bird, give a lie or two. I hate writing words, that's the hardest part about this business as far as I'm concerned. I'm not really a natural songwriter.

Rod is hoping he'll make an album this summer to be released during the winter: "I think it's about time I sang some songs I want to sing instead of playing safe. I know what pleases. There wouldn't be any of my songs." In fact, he wants to sing some standards; perhaps that was why that middle of the road album was on the stereo.

Of The Faces he says: "I think we were one of the first to bring a flicker of glamour back. We definitely made it a lot more jolly. It was accidental really, no-one seemed to want to listen to us, so we took to the bottle."

I also renewed an acquaintance with Frank Zappa while in L.A. I've always admired his work; as well as seeing various Mothers perform. I also saw his film '200 Motels' and liked it, which is more than many did, but perhaps that is because I saw it in New York on the opening day of Jesus Christ Superstar. Come to think of it, I saw it again when it was premiered in London and sat through it with the Arts Editor of The Times. We both enjoyed it, which is more

than we did Grease.

For me Zappa has always been an innovator, a complicated player of musical practical jokes—you can even see musical references to Schoenberg in his work. I think the Mothers reached their highpoint when Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan were with them. Both had been together as The Turtles and were apt to burst into parodies of their past hits. A fixation taken up again in '200 Motels' with the groupie who could only come at her best if the pop star sang his former hit. Zappa, of course, has never had a hit, mainly because most of the radio stations in America won't play his records, yet his concerts continue to sell out and as far as his work is concerned, he'd had a new lease of energy, after the depression caused by the broken leg incident at The Rainbow.

I caught up with him in the middle of the night mixing his latest album in Los Angeles. It is his habit to work through until breakfast-time and then go to bed. The night I was with him he played me some of the new stuff, which I thought much tighter and commercial than anything he has done before.

Zappa has always had the reputation of being a perfectionist and this night proved no exception. In fact when I left shortly before 2am he had what he thought was the final mix on one of the tracks, and it had taken many hours to get there. Yet when I rang him the next day he said that later that morning he'd scrapped the whole thing and started again. Needless to say, he has a very understanding engineer.

Two days later, he dropped round to my hotel to talk, which brought a rejoinder from his manager Herb Cohen when he arrived after half an hour: "The journalist usually goes to the star." Frank suggested he wait in the coffee shop. If you're genuinely interested in his work then he'll give you his time. The conversation continued with Frank sipping copious cups of coffee.

We talked first about *that* film, because remembering something about the director Tony Palmer wanting his name taken off at the time, I wondered if Zappa himself still stood by it? "Yes, I certainly stand by it. The next thing I've written is science fiction. I still like the idea of using people who aren't actors. The problem with actors is that they are so busy acting and furthering their own careers that they don't get into the material. The normal commercial films are so superficial, they don't get me off. You do see great performances by actors, but sometimes the stories aren't so great."

The conversation turned to the tour which will bring him to England in September after the Far East and Australia. "We play a different book every time we go out. You can expect there will be a complete turnover in material every eight months. The only reason we'd revive a number is because we get a lot of requests for it."

When I was down at the studios

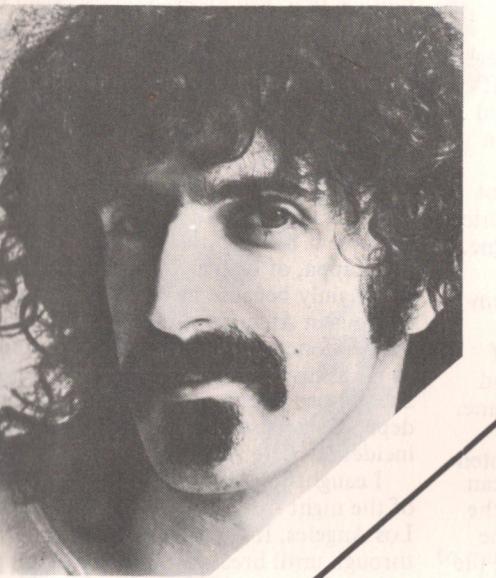
watching him mix the album I heard a few tracks, and he'll probably be playing some of that material when he's over here. There's one song in particular, about Indians riding into Montana, which was the subject of the night long mix and revise, and I think one of the strongest songs he's written for a long time. He described it as: "A challenge of mixing. There's a lot of inside stuff going on, and it's sixteen tracks originally. My engineer Kerry McNabb is fantastic. As a matter of fact I changed my mind at five o'clock in the morning on that one. It was then I said I was pissed off with the re-mix and he said 'O.K. let's do it all again,' and that's what we did. By that time I'd nearly spent 950 dollars of studio time. We shortened the guitar solo down. Montana is now a fantastic mix, there is only one place where the words aren't audible."

He underlined the hours creator and engineer had been working: "He got there at 2pm, he assembled the secondary master mix on 'Camarillo Brillo' and I got there at four. We do anywhere from 14 to 16 hours a night. I used Bolse Sound, Ike and Tina Turner's place, mostly overdubbing for 13 to 14 days. I sat down yesterday and said 'Man, I'm spending a lot of time in the studio, but if I was on the road I'd waste more time.' There were six days of track sessions. The first day was 12 hours, the second day 10 hours, the shortest time was eight hours in a day. I'm working on two albums at the same time. One is with The Mothers, and one is my own. There are two or three tracks dealing with boy-girl situations. Then there's a song about TV called 'I Am A Slime', and we're probably going to put some extracts of Nixon's Watergate speech on that one. Then there's a song called 'Dental Floss' simply because I thought somebody should write a song about it. On Montana we have the sound of whooping Indians."

When Zappa visits Britain he'll be playing Wembley, which comes as a relief to him after the Rainbow fracas and a non too pleasant appearance at an Oval pop festival. As he says now: "If I had to work at some place like the Oval again you could forget it. There were some ugly incidents after it. There were some punch-ups on the steps. I went down and said to Herbie [his manager] 'OK let's go into the laundry business'."

Zappa is hypersensitive about the sound quality when he is touring, explaining: "The sound that comes to the audience is the responsibility of the guy who is in charge of those knobs. What I've done before is give him a book and then we'd get on the bus and I'd have cassettes of our work and play them to him so he knew just what to do. The difference between what most groups do and what we do is that we have to do a sound check. It takes two hours to set up, and then we run a three hour sound check."

The element of Zappa's work that has always appealed to me is satire. I told him I hoped this would always be



touring. From the business point of view you could have made a big thing out of what happened. That went on for nine months. I was off the road for more than a year."

When he got bored he took interest in a rock n' roll band and went down and jammed with them three days a week, as well as with Aynsley Dunbar and that grew into the 20 piece band. So as Zappa said: "There were no interviews, no airplay, no nothing. I might as well have died at that time, then to come back with a 20-piece band was a little bit strange, but that was what I felt like doing."

And so to the present which looks like producing an even stranger liaison, this time coming out of the friendship between Ike and Tina Turner and Zappa. "They've asked me to do an album with Tina. It's a matter of scheduling. She is interested in doing something weird. I met Ike and Tina at the studios. I've talked to them down there. I bumped into Tina and got a chance to talk to them a little bit more. They heard some of the stuff I did down there. She is unbelievable, I've never seen anyone like that. They both work so hard, it will scare you to death if you think our sessions are long. The shortest his sessions go is 48 hours recording, and as soon as he burns out musicians, some more come in. There's a recreation room down the hall and there's a pool table there. The Ikettes come in and they'll be standing there practising and sometimes he'll go for five days straight without sleeping, he just stays in that little room. His body must suffer, I've heard the results of some of those long sessions. Tina is starting to write now and they are amazing. Ike says his favourite drummer is Red, it's a little red box which does five different rock drum beats, so any drummer who has any fluctuation they go out the door. It works for the songs he is doing."

Dunbar is on that one. It was recorded at Trident, and I also have some tracks with Sugarcane Harris. They were recorded in England in 1970. The thing is that when you put an album together one of the criteria is how much time you have on your side. If you have all loud hot material with the music jumping up around one and two you'll get distortion on the disc. When you have assembled what you think is right you jingle things around, and sometimes things get left out of albums."

Zappa has kept all these tracks on tape in storage and he reckons it would fill three rooms at present: "It's just a gigantic amount of tape. A lot of the stuff I wouldn't release because it's not commensurate with the quality that has come out recently. I have a lot of stuff from the first batch of Mothers which is still very good, about 12 albums altogether."

From the English point of view it is almost as if in the past year or so Zappa had disappeared. He explains this by saying: "During the time I was in the wheelchair not touring, there was pretty much a slump in the popularity of the group, and I didn't do any interviews, and there was no information coming out. I didn't have any choice about the

Finally the conversation returned to where we had started really, about the non-airplay of his work. He smiled knowingly and said: "You never know, one of these days I might make a mistake and put out something that got on the radio. In 1967 one of my songs actually got on the playlist in Phoenix, Arizona, from the 'We're Only In It For The Money' album."

Back to L.A. As Connor wrote in the last edition I've brought lots of tapes and interviews back for ZZ. Did you know that when Pete Frame was a smaller lad than he is now he used to have the words Duane Eddy inscribed on the crossbar of his bicycle. I'm a mine of irrelevant information. Who else would know that the telegraphic address of Walt Disney in London is Mickmouse!

But back to live sounds in L.A., where I made Pete's ears burn with nostalgia by going down to the Troubadour to see Roger McGuinn's new band. On the opening night Bruce Johnson and David Crosby (second house) got up on the stage with him, and his band already included Gene Clark, and Spanky, late of Spanky and Our Gang. It was a memorable evening because besides playing stuff from his new album 'Roger McGuinn' [CBS], which I've hardly taken off the player, especially a track called 'Draggin' Cross The USA'—rock's first jet surfin' song—he also played some vintage Byrds stuff, 'Eight Miles High' and 'Rock n' Roll Star' included. I went again at the end of the week but the band wasn't so tight that night, in fact they were suffering from a definite dose of L.A. looseness, but McGuinn is back and I tried to entice him to England. When he's further sorted his band out, he'd like to come if anyone wants to listen. McGuinn interview coming. One afternoon I went out to his house which is high up in the hills overlooking the Pacific Ocean which he is sharing with Gene Clark.

He played me a preview of the then new album, track by track, giving me the lyric sheets song by song. In fact he gave me the originals of three songs to bring back to reprint in ZigZag, so they'll be appearing with the interview, including 'Draggin'', although probably an even more interesting track and song is about Dylan, Lennon and Mick Jagger, and McGuinn enticed Dylan to play the harmonica during the verse about himself.

McGuinn is very much into electronics and delighted in showing me a briefcase he has constructed with a built-in ticking sound to frighten plane people, another briefcase which holds a phone

that he can use even when on jets, and his video-cassette set-up on which he had recorded the Peter Sellers film, 'The Mouse That Roared'. The house is dominated by a large billiard table and swarms with cats and dogs. Dylan is staying just up the road. In the interview McGuinn admits what the ZigZag serial predicted. He was the hire and fire man of the Byrds: "Someone had to make the decisions."

So what's new in L.A.? I met the Pointer Sisters, four amazing black ladies, Bette Midler multiplied by four.

The have a superbly seedy background, which at the moment they are only too keen to talk about, although how long that will go on I don't know. One of them was a hooker, etc., carried a gun. Hilarious, and they're good to watch too. I saw them tape a segment for NBC's Helen Reddy Show, which made old Top Of The Pops look like a stroke of genius! The cameras in the L.A. studio were incredibly static and the resultant shots highly average. Anyway the Pointers are on Blue Thumb, which has done a lot of work in the past and I'm glad to say that Island are going to bring out several Blue Thumb albums here including The Pointer Sisters, The Crusaders, an album that underlines how dated Memphis is these days. Underlines by being good that is; Dan Hicks and The Hot Licks 'Last Train To Hicksville', which I found totally bland and not very interesting, and also his great live classic 'Where's The Money'. Finally the superb National Lampoon album 'Lemmings'. I brought this back with me and have been delighting music friends with it ever since because it is the all time put down of the rock festival, obviously based on Woodstock. The National Lampoon is a cross between Punch and Private Eye and the staff having made the album are touring the show on the road, there are really good take-offs, put downs, what you will, of people like Joe Cocker and Randy Newman. They are acutely musical observations, which makes the album worth hearing several times because there's always something new to discover.

Met up with the incredible Simon Stokes and the Blackwhip Thrill Band, which is the title of his first album [Spindizzy, distributed by CBS], a sort of musical Alice Cooper without mascara. A really gutsy album with songs on it like 'The Boa Constrictor Ate My Wife Last Night'. I think they'd do very well in England because they're what I call a really greasy band, flashbacks to Stackwaddy, except that musically Simon Stokes and Co are superior, and the album is produced by David Briggs, who with Norbert Putnam now operate out of their own studios in Nashville. A rock oasis in the Country territory. Briggs and Putnam were with Area Code 615, a group which received more attention when they'd given up than when they were playing.

Dropped into the Asylum offices for the inevitable non-interview with Joni Mitchell and I was with Peter Jenner of

the infamous Blackhill organisation at the time. He was over in the States with Roy Harper and he embarrassed the assembled Asylumites by pointing out that although they claimed to be a strictly music label not after hit singles, most of the albums we looked at had little stickers on for the DJs saying in as many words 'Contains hit single ingredient'. Their records are quickly beginning to all sound the same, maybe because all the musicians play on each others' albums. John David Souther [see recent ZigZag Michael Murphey interview] is just finishing an album with his old lady Linda Ronstadt; he's also got an album of his own coming. I've got great faith, belief, in J.D. He had an album out here about eight months ago, which went unnoticed.

I collected my new Michael Murphey album 'Cosmic Cowboy Souvenir', when I went into A&M. He's with EMI here, and it's well up to the standard of the first album.

There was great excitement and paranoia in L.A. at the time I was there because the FBI agents were in investigating the record industry, their inquiries centering upon drugs supplied to groups by record companies and excessive numbers of albums given to DJs by the same companies. Some disc jockeys have been getting as many as 25 copies of the same album, and then flogging them off in their own record shops. Ho, ho, hee, hee. The drugs are usually demanded by groups, bought on expense accounts by the promotion man and handed over. Of course, the record companies knew what was going on, but it will be the small men who are sacked as the scapegoats. Could it happen here? Does it happen here? Well, how many BBC radio and TV producers' incomes are increased by being given one copy of every record released, most of which are sold? Journalists too, come to that. I've never sold a record in my life, with the result I had to move to a larger building to hold my collection, but Tobler has put me on to swooping the worst ones for better albums.

Other nice live music while I was in L.A. Larry Coryell at the Whisky, which was a really odd gig for him to play because it's just a drink and dance place really. Leo Kottke at the Troubadour, and the experimental night at the same Troub. How I wish we had that in London. Anybody who wants to hands their name in and gets a place on the running order. Most of what I heard was rubbish, but it was worth going just to hear Spooner Oldham, Aretha Franklin's ex-keyboard man on organ in a big band. The band won't last but Spooner will. He wrote among other things 'Sweet Inspirations'. Coming soon, the Spooner Oldham story. He just has to be the zaniest musical character in L.A., but then he comes out of the South and somehow that seems to help. He was born and bred in Muscle Shoals. Oh, and he has a song on that new McGuinn album.

An incomplete, abridged, abbreviated and bigotted account of the National Association of Rock Writers Convention in Memphis, May 24-26th 1973.

Saturday morning 5th May

Shuffling through the morning's post, in bed as usual, I come across a large airmail envelope postmarked Memphis, and bearing the flamboyant legend "National Association of Rock Writers". What's all this bullshit—someone trying to hype me into paying membership fees to some cruddy new half-assed organisation? What an arrogant body of big headed ego trippers that must be! I opened it up. They're holding a convention (to which I was now being cordially invited) in Memphis, it seemed—and bloody good luck to them. But wait....what's this fine print? "Registration, hotel accommodation and air fare will be furnished complimentary." Grammatically incorrect maybe, but blimey—is some fool really prepared to pay all the expenses of shipping me halfway across the globe to participate in three days of bullshitting? Surely this can't be!

What's it all about? A closer look, John S King (who turned out to be press officer for Stax Records) had signed the invitation which explained that the meeting was to "bring together the leading music writers from all parts of the United States and England for the purpose of creating an organization to provide improved communications with and increased cooperation among writers and all other segments of the music industry, as well as to enhance the professional standing of the rock journalist."

"The idea for this convention is the result of my conversations with numerous writers about the need for and merits of a rock critic's organisation. With the assistance of a number of writers who believed in this concept, I have secured the necessary sponsorship to make the first convention possible."

"We are looking forward to having serious and productive discussions as well as a lot of fun, and we certainly hope that you will be able to attend."

Naturally, I'm going—after all, you don't get the chance to throw stones into the Mississippi River every day.

Sunday 6th May

Doubts set in. It can't be true. It's obviously a hoax or a mistake. No one in their right mind is that stupid—to amass all those buffoons and finance a three day orgy.

I decide to phone Ed Ward, good mate (through letters) and contributor to Rolling Stone, Creem, etc etc....he's bound to know what it's all about.

Unfortunately, it's 2am in Sausalito—I miscalculated. But Ed doesn't seem to mind being dragged from his bed and explains that Jon Tiven, founder of the New Haven Rock Press, has managed to get himself in with a new label called Ardent Records, a subsidiary of Stax....

THE ZIGZAG WANDERER RIDES AGAIN

Thursday 24th May

Having endured a ten hour journey (change planes at New York and stretch your legs at Nashville) we got to Memphis airport to find the place stuffed with stars of pen, ink and typewriter—all having, by some miracle of modern travel and unbelievable co-ordination, managed to convene simultaneously from West, South, North and East and now milling around trying to identify baggage. John Tiven is trying to allocate limousines for all these wandering Jews and eventually a Cadillac Fleetwood whisked our bunch off to the Rivermount Holiday Inn, rising out of a bank of a bend in the Mississippi, and a luxurious gaff if ever I saw one.

Meltzer's going to be there, eh? Above all other rock writers, Meltzer, a pioneer from the early days of Crawdaddy, is a legend....stories of his feats abound. Every Yank who's ever passed through North Marston has had tales of his deeds, and if I'm to believe all these, he's short but tough, drinks all day long, writes all his articles first draft while watching television, is slightly deranged from excessive amounts of acid, alcohol and other euphorians, and he inevitably strips down to black underpants at any social function. A pissartist pygmy in black underwear? The mind boggles.

Tuesday 22nd May

Two weeks after I'd returned my completed application form, I'd written it all off as a joke. I'd heard no more and assumed that the whole affair had been cancelled due to excessive costs. In fact, I'd made other arrangements for the weekend—but then, that evening, Jon Ingham (press officer at EMI) phoned to tell me it's on; he's going, and so are Dave Laing and Simon Frith from 'Let It Rock'. Amazing!

20 bullshitters bullshitting
19 ballspinners ballspinning
18 pissartists drinking
17 gluttons noshing
16 bigmouths bragging
15 bigots boasting

14 nice guys smiling etc etc. Here clamoured every kind of fugitive from all the 'singer-songwriter' plagues and 'new Beatles' catastrophes that ever lashed mankind; every bloke who's ever wielded a biro pen to praise a performer seemed to be there—though this is in fact a weird mixture of rock/mag men, freelancers and fanzine (small circulation mimeographed enthusiasts' papers) pro-



ducers, all apparently selected by Tiven (who's an old mate of mine—hence my selection and no one from Melody Maker!). Very few writers from daily or local papers are here, but most of the 'big names' familiar to readers of Rolling Stone, Creem, etc are....Chet Flippo, Ben Edmonds, Greg Shaw, Lester Bangs (larger than life), R Meltzer (smaller than life), Ed Ward (with huge black cowboy hat and moustache to match), Lenny Kaye, Alan Betrock, etc.

This meeting was followed by 'The T.A.M.I. Show', a mid-sixties film starring Gerry & The Pacemakers, Billy J Kramer, Lesley Gore, the Stones, Chuck Berry, James Brown, Jan & Dean and a whole host of has-beens, but we'd lost six hours in various time changes and keeping my eyes open was as

difficult as trying to stuff butter up a wildcat's arse with a red hot poker—so I staggered off to my bunk mid-film.

Friday 25th May

Waking up in the morning light and staring from my 11th floor window, out across the Mississippi river. Can this be true? Am I dreaming....?

Reality; even at eight in the morning, the colour telly is in full swing, including a panel game on Channel 3 hosted by the kind of imbecile who couldn't pour piss out of a boot if the instructions were written on the heel. The contestants sit at a desk, wank a giant lever and three dials rotate as on a fruit machine. This hocus-pocus determines the subject for questions. Infantile horse-manure. What kind of cretin sits

watching this kind of crap so early in the day? Well, I did for one—and in the few minutes that I gaped incredulously, a young negress won over nine thousand dollars plus a car.

The condemned man ate a hearty breakfast in the company of two of the nicest blokes there; Alan Betrock (who gave me a guided tour of New York when I was there with Genesis) and Jesse Farlowe (who's just been staying at Yeoman Cottage). I wasn't condemned, but the breakfast was hearty—as much egg, bacon, sausage, toast, coffee, beans, grits that you could possibly cram down your gullet....you could keep having your plate refilled until satisfied, which was just as well because I was so hungry I'd have gladly attempted a stewed doorknob.

The first formal meeting, presided over by John King of Stax (who apparently forked out between 60 and 100 thousand dollars worth of Isaac Hayes tax loss to finance this fiasco....sorry, convention) and Jon Tiven was purportedly to 'agree on general things' and 'form a nebulous organisation rather than stay a loose disorganised bunch of non-professionals'. Several suggestions, including the production of a regular newsletter and a directory of rock writers, were thrown out for discussion and various geezers took the microphone to express their opinions. Amid cheers and whistles, Meltzer took the rostrum to promote ideas of boycotting papers which didn't pay and record companies which didn't send him enough records, but a couple of hours of discussion yielded precious little in the way of constructive useful conclusion apart from everyone agreeing that a union (or a formal organisation, at least) should be formed to clan together against scurrilous rags (like ZigZag....no, only joking, folks) which didn't pay writers. One diversion, however, was of interest. A certain fat publisher, who was about as welcome as a turd in a punchbowl and as out of place as a bastard at a family reunion, got up to deliver what evolved into a long plug for his boring magazine, which I'm sure no one present will ever read again.

Liberally sprinkling his turgid words with 'beautiful' and 'nitty gritty', and claiming to be 'one of us', he proved most tiresome and obnoxious. "What would you do if we boycotted you?" someone asked. "I'd find somebody else," he retorted amidst great jeering, whereupon he rapidly lost all self control as his temper and nostrils flared simultaneously...."Why should I pay you fifteen dollars for a review? What makes you so special?"

He was eased away from the microphone. A tour of the Schlitz beer factory, producing "4.4 million barrels every year," revealed that American beer is as weak as office tea; no self-respecting British drinker would soil his lips with the stuff. I sampled each of their three different types (purely for research purposes, you understand) and I fear that the recorded verdict must be thumbs down for Schlitz beer. Sorry about that Mr Schlitz, but all

it did for me was fill my head with gas and my belly with lead.

Lunch, barbecue style, in Overton Park, with squirrels nipping hither and thither. By this time, I was getting very suspicious about the lack of pickaxe handle wielding/bible punching/hippie hating rednecks and drawling blonde Southern belles. In fact, I saw nothing to substantiate the image I'd had of the deep South, as conveyed by books and films like 'Easy Rider'. Is it all a myth, part of the fantasy bullshit of the Southern States, along with banjo strumming darkies sucking watermelon in their porch rocking chairs?

Back to the hotel for free time/chatting/drinking during which I heard a selection of highly amusing if often improbable tales—such as a wild rumour that Jeff Beck hadn't been in a car accident at all but had had his hands broken, just like Paul Newman in 'The Hustler', for not doing as he was told, and I heard about The Holy Modal Rounders passing around a balloon filled with laughing gas, which they inhaled from, but there is a distinct 'scale of cool' in American rock writers (on the whole). The top dogs (regularly published cats) don't mix with the lower orders, or if they do, it's usually a snooty display of arrogance as they expect their words to be treated with utmost respect and reverence. More about that later (if I dare!).

In the evening, it was down to the banks of the Mississippi (or maybe it was the levee?) to board a genuine riverboat of the type favoured by lace and velvet dandies who sit around circular baize covered gambling tables in Hollywood epics about the South....and off we chugged, big wheel keep on turning, like 'Proud Mary' come to life. Music too. Jimmy Dickenson (the piano pumper who backed up on some of Ry Cooder's albums) and his band belted out their sloppy blues shambles and then Furry Lewis took the stage. Poor old sod. He could hardly walk, let alone play and sing....fancy a living legend still having to earn his crust like that. Seemed happy enough though.

What a majestic, awesome river that is....wider than a mile, just like it says in the song, I'm crossing you in style, observing the forested islands and the rounded banks of silt which lace out of the quiet waters. And it was still boiling hot at 10pm—I was sweating like a pregnant nun in church—but who cares when you can get as much free drink as you can consume. (I hadn't touched beer for six years until this trip, but I drank like a fish in Memphis—you have to, just to prevent your body dehydrating completely. But like I said, the beer there is little stronger than Tesco shandy.)

There was a scheduled expedition to the midnight premiere of 'Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid', but I couldn't muster the stamina to drag myself off to it—not that I missed much, according to Dave Laing. Instead I watched some weird TV pop show compered by Gladys

Knight and the Pips. It was appalling, until suddenly they introduced John Stewart! And there he was, singing live, backed by a little band. I couldn't believe it! John Stewart, standing right there singing 'Road Away'. Just too much. Unfortunately, no one else at the convention seemed too impressed by him; they were all engrossed in conversation about the qualities of the Barron Knights and the Sweet. (Some of these Yankee rock critics are weird fish, I'm telling you.)



Saturday 26th May

Alan, Jesse and I decided to skip the next meeting in favour of ripping down to the Sun Records warehouse (and Simon, Ed and Nick Tosches had the same idea too, because we met them in there). As the taxi driver had so delicately observed, the Sun place was deep in the heart of "nigger country....so you guys better be careful."

Tom Phillips, brother of Sam (who invented Elvis and Jerry Lee, among others), was at the cash desk and allowed us to investigate the back rooms where, just like a Soho bookshop, all the hardcore enthusiast stuff was arrayed. Apart from piles of Sun 45s dating back to the 50s (but re-pressed copies rather than the original pressings) there were stacks and stacks of original issue 78s, surrounded by a sea of broken ones. Talk about walking on gilded splinters. I looked through most of the piles (which took a few hours, and it was hotter than an Egyptian well-digger's armpit in there, I'm telling you) but all the ultra rare stuff had already gone. I managed to pick up things like 'Blue Suede Shoes' by Carl Perkins and some early Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee singles, however, and I staggered home bearing over fifty 78s, thinking I'd make a fortune in London because I'd heard tales of "£5 a piece" and I only paid 20 cents each. Unfortunately, some enterprising collectors had already imported loads of them and had glutted the market....anyone want any unplayed Sun 78s?

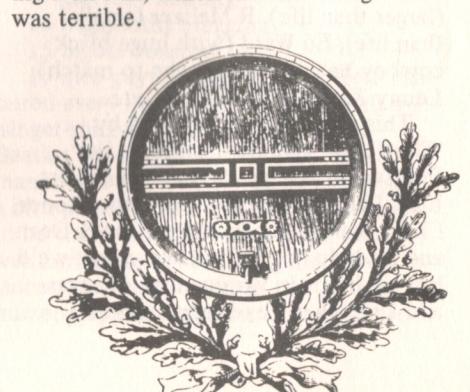
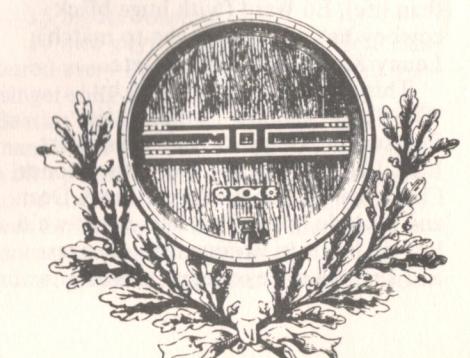
My god it was hot, and the air was as dry as a popcorn fart—over 90 in the shade. No wonder the spades all sit around doing nothing—I'm sure I couldn't work in that kind of heat. Thankfully, the hotel had bins of ice on every floor and coke machines too—so you could consume iced coke whenever you desired. The Coca Cola company must make a fortune down there. Out on the streets, the blacks were indeed sitting on porches of dilapidating timber houses, some

clutching beer cans masked in brown paper bags (Ed Ward explained that it's illegal to display a beer can in public. Very strange laws they have down there.)

Lunch ("mystery meat on toast" as Ed called it) in the penthouse restaurant where we learn that a meeting took place in our absence, during which officers were elected to represent and legislate on behalf of the rest. (Dave Laing was chosen on behalf of the English contingent). This committee will decide on just what purpose the 'Rock Writers of the World' (as we're now called) will serve as an organisation to protect the rights of its members (at the bargain price of 5 dollars a year subscription fee).

A boring tour of Stax and Ardent Studios (both entirely devoid of any activity) was followed by a flying visit to Elvis Presley's house Graceland. Barbed wire, high walls and fences precluded the entry of sex-crazed, honey-dripping housewives (or whoever listens to Elvis these days). But Simon and I managed to climb a fence to get a better view (being careful not to touch the poison ivy) and certain members of the party (no names, folks) had the audacity to piss over the boundary wall into his front garden. Disgraceful behaviour, I call it. (Sorry about that, Elvis old chap.)

That evening we took over the place for a banquet at Lafayettes, a club/bar/restaurant in the Carnaby Street area of Memphis. There we ate (and drank a lot too, I fear) and listened to four live bands: the High Steppers, a good local band who played tight as the Bees and were led by one Larry Raspberry, who in fact used to lead The Gentrys (they hit the big time with 'Keep On Dancing' back in the mid sixties). Then we had....wait for it...."Skin Alley....great new band from England," who took the stage rigid with fear, quivering like a dog shitting cactus. Stax, having signed them for a fabulous figure, were anxious to parade their new lads before the press and flew them out from Notting Hill specially. Unfortunately, there was little reaction from the rock scribes of America, most of whom were rather more interested in discovering new varieties of cocktail. Exit Skin Alley, pursued by apathy and the odd query as to the origin of their lewd name, and enter Big Star, another Stax (Ardent Records actually) band, starring ex Box Top Alex Chilton. They were great. I really enjoyed them—only to be informed that this was only a re-union gig because they'd broken up a few weeks earlier. Too bad. The last group was a jam band including Don Nix, which filled the stage and was terrible.



Of far greater interest was the scene outside; it seems that all the groovy people of Memphis dress up in their best gear on Saturday night and parade about in Overton Square (where Lafayettes was). These included a gaudily clad prostitute, who did no business at all in the three hours we were watching her ("these guys must be a bunch of fags" she told her pimp, a giant spade who periodically walked by to keep an eye on things).

Some of the spade bucks were incredible; really overdressed in white (or even full drape purple satin) suits with huge floppy brimmed hats and excessive amounts of silk handkerchief flowing from their breast pockets. I was told that this was not peculiar to Memphis or even the South—most cities contain elements of this new breed of black dandy.



Of greater interest too were the antics of Meltzer, who spent most (all, in fact) of the evening (and the day) drinking for all he was worth. Chances are that if he wasn't to be seen thrusting the mouth of a vertical beer bottle against his lips, he was on the dance floor leaping and cavorting like a lunatic and every so often collapsing insensate in a heap, whereupon helping hands would drag him to his feet so his dancing could continue.

Before we leave Lafayettes, let me tell you about this piece of graffiti on the bog wall there. Someone had written "I'm 9 inches long, 2 inches thick and ready to go" and a different pen had added below "Yeah....but how big is your prick?"

Sunday 27th May
Sad day of parting. Packing up and pulling out—leaving friends, old and new.

To the airport, thence (by cranky old flying machine) to Atlanta, where we walked around prior to catching our next plane. Atlanta—where the governor apparently used to hand out pickaxe handles to facilitate coon-hunting. In fact, during our travels we'd seen signs to all the Civil Rights landmarks....

Little Rock, Jackson, Birmingham. Quite eerie—especially if you grew up a mid-sixties folkie listening to music much of which was inspired by the activities of Martin Luther King and his colleagues.

Off to New York and then over the Atlantic to Heathrow, only waking to consume TWA's pre-packed food, which wasn't at all bad except that the plasticity percentage is on the increase. A sign of the times is the synthetic muck they give you as cream....it's just water and chemicals, as it states on the lid. Ugh?

Back in rainy old England.

Very little was achieved in terms of constructive conclusions or anything like that, but it was a fabulous weekend. When I got home I felt really lovesick; that butterfly feeling, you know....and I actually thought I'd left my heart in the USA, shithouse that it is. How can I ever thank Stax Records....what can I say?

Before I sign off this lengthy tract of bloated rubbish, I must express one or two views about 'rock critics' (as opposed to rock writers). I personally have little time for these trotters of bigotted bilious drivel, these self appointed judges, these arrogant breast-beating bags of hot air and bullshit (except that they're good for a laugh now and then). My main objection is the total lack of humility and modesty displayed by most of these people; they seem to think that everyone should bow to the wisdom of their opinions and conclusions. I've known people, record buyers, who said things like "Oh, it must be good—that guy in Rolling Stone said it was"....and they believe it because the writer is so flushed with self-importance. If they knew he was a pimple faced dim-witted wimp who couldn't put his finger up his arse with a funnel, they wouldn't give a fiddler's toss what he thought.

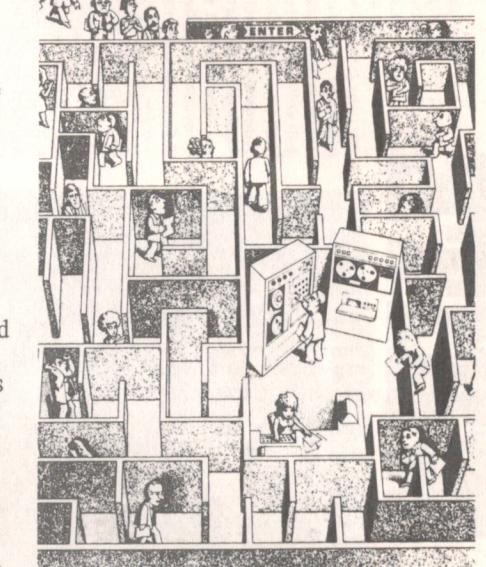
Apart from that, you should never trust a record review until you're sure the critic isn't either

- (a) keeping in with the record company which sends him lots of free records
- (b) compromising his true conclusions to preserve his connections
- (c) friends (or enemies) of the artist in question
- (d) an arsehole
- (e) all of the above.

Before they start writing all their album review horse-manure, all so-called rock critics should state their age, their qualifications for assuming the role of critic, list their five favourite tracks ever and explain exactly their basis of criticism (i.e. whether a record moves—or fails to move—their emotionally, whether they're criticising on grounds of musicianship/material, whether they're commenting on a record as being part of a cultural phenomenon (for instance, a university lecturer discussing the significance of Slade's music to the kids today blah blah blah)), and whether they consider themselves part of the audience at which they think the record is being directed or whether they are on a pedestal apart, assessing it on behalf of other outsiders looking in.

Of course, many of the people I spoke to seemed to know their stuff and were modest with it; for example I was very impressed by the sincerity of Chet Flippo, Greg Shaw, Ed Ward and several others who appeared to love rock music more than their egos. But as for some of the creeps there—like....ah, but no names, folks—what do you want, integrity? I want to go to next year's convention! Anyway, I'm only a paunchy balding 29 year old Mamas and Papas freak, and I'm probably a more pigheaded and cockier git than any of them.

Pete



CLARENCE WHITE

7th JUNE 1944 – 14th JULY 1973

As you will doubtless be aware, Clarence White died on Saturday, July 14th from injuries sustained as a result of being knocked down by a drunken woman driver as he was helping his brother load their equipment into a car after a club gig.

I'm sure that most *Zigzag* readers, even though they didn't know him, felt very close to Clarence through his playing with the Byrds and so, instead of the scheduled Chapter 7 of the Byrds history, I propose to write a little about him.

Born into a musical family (his father even played harmonica on 'Green Apple Quickstep' on *'Byrdmaniax'*) in Lewiston, Maine, Clarence was playing guitar by the time he was six. A couple of years later, the Whites moved to Burbank, California, when 'Pop' White was employed by Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, and at ten, Clarence was travelling and playing guitar with his brothers Roland (16) and Eric (12). They called themselves the Country Boys, specialising in bluegrass music, and played at barn dances and local events at weekends and during school holidays.

As the folk-scene began to open out during the late fifties they were able to get a foothold in the coffee house and club scene and went on to play folk festivals up and down the Coast until 1962, they decided to expand their line-up. At this point, they became the Kentucky Colonels, with Clarence on guitar, Roland on mandolin, Roger Bush (who had replaced the marrying Eric a year earlier) on string bass, Billy Ray Latham on banjo, and Leroy Mack on dobro.

The Kentucky Colonels became a legend, of course, touring the States extensively and keeping the flame of a fast-disappearing aspect of America's heritage burning. Their two albums for World Pacific (neither of which were issued here¹) amply demonstrate the proficiency and finesse which Clarence and Eric acquired over years of playing local events at weekends and during school holidays.

Because of the recent reformation and tour of the Colonels, together with the resurgence of interest in bluegrass, LA had scheduled one of these albums for August release but have now decided to postpone this for fear of appearing to be cashing in on Clarence's death. Good on them.

together.

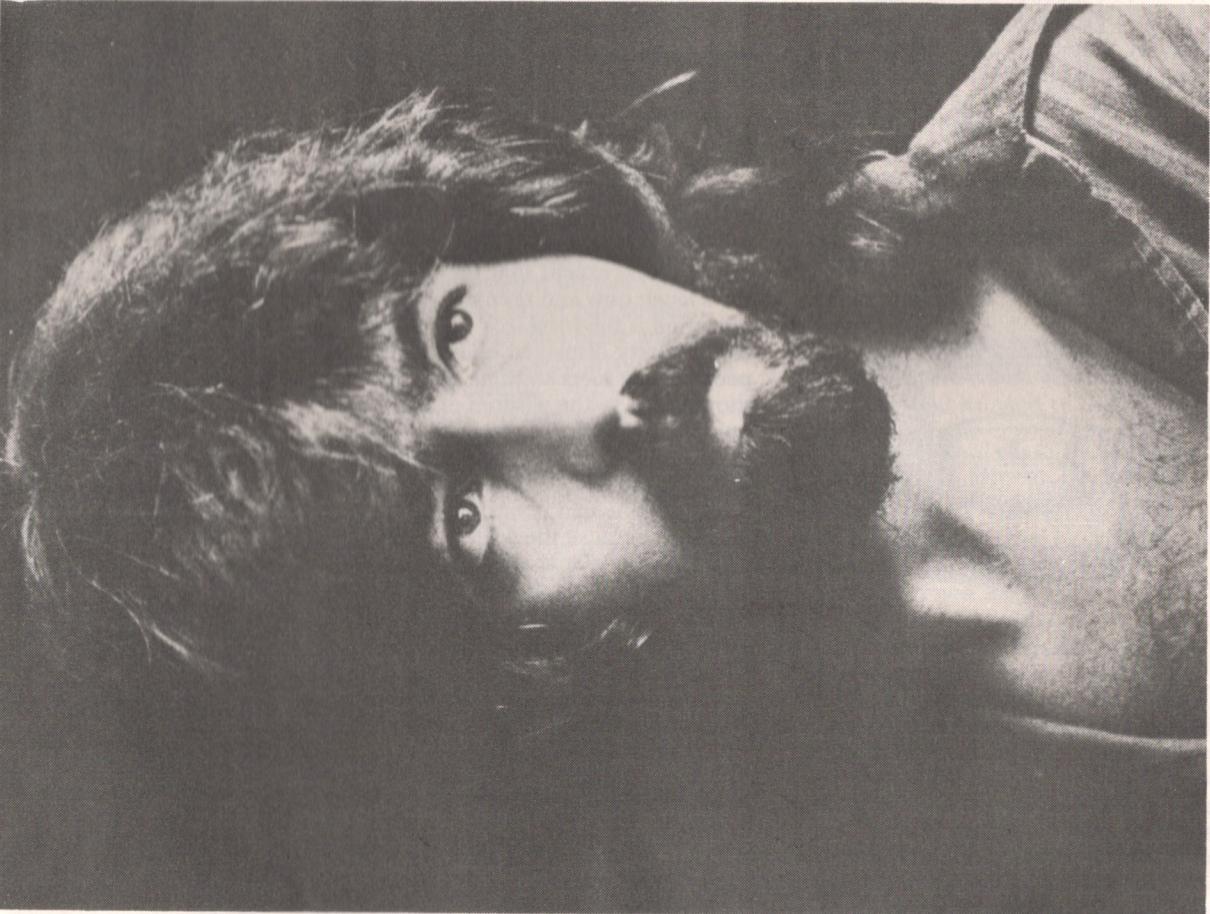
"I spent almost every hour with my guitar," said Clarence, "it was my whole life. . . . but it was all acoustic playing – bluegrass mostly, with some Django Reinhardt stuff too. Then, when I was in my late teens, I began to get interested in electric guitar, which up to that point, I'd never even played!"

In 1965, he left the Kentucky Colonels (who folded soon after), a decision he ascribes to a growing sense of frustration. "It wasn't so much that I was getting bored with acoustic bluegrass; I could feel so many new things in the air and I wanted to get in the stream of what I thought was a new kind of music which combined what you could call a 'folk integrity' and electric rock!"

A year earlier, his interests in folk-rock (as yet an undiscovered phenomenon, though the deluge was only around the corner) had been kindled by two overtures: Elektra had approached him to do an instrumental album, and Jim Dickson (later Byrds manager) had been round with a demo of a song he thought might be just the job for an electric group built around Clarence.

"He had this dub of 'Mr Tambourine Man' sung by Bob Dylan with Ramblin' Jack Elliott singing on the choruses; it had apparently been made for 'Another Side Of' but couldn't be used because Elliott was contracted elsewhere. It was a pretty sloppy recording – you know, like a drunk man might sing it, but the idea interested me and I tried to get the other guys to go for it. They weren't at all keen on it – turned it down flat because they thought it was a stupid song and because they said electric folk was just unacceptable. . . . you know that ethic/purist squabbling that later became such a big issue. So I guess Dickson took the song to Roger McGuinn, though I've still got that dub. . . . I guess it's pretty rare now, maybe even worth money!"

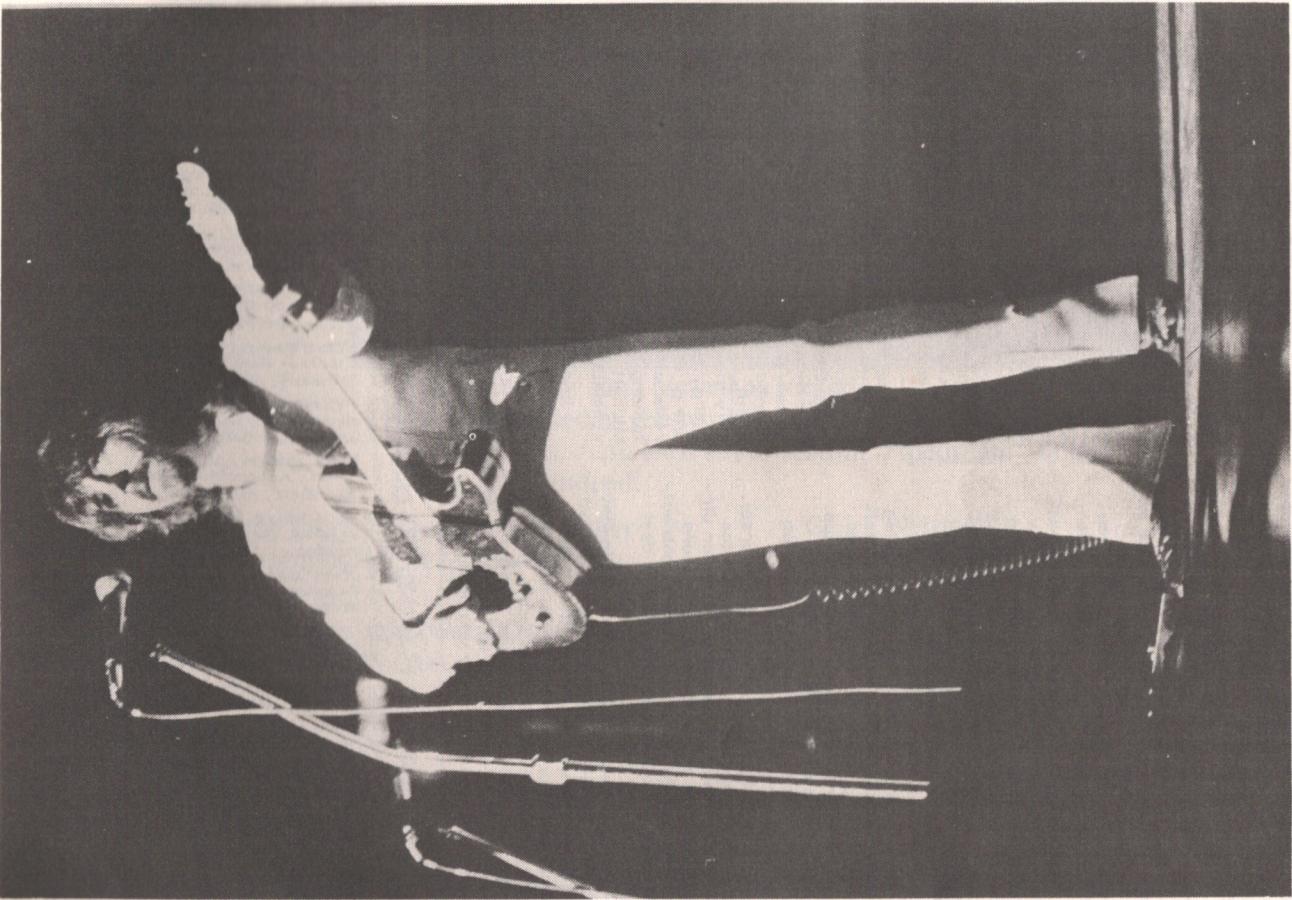
"I haven't mastered it yet – not by any



means!" he replied. "The transition was pretty strange; it was almost like starting all over again. You see, I was playing bluegrass, picking along to very fast fiddle tunes. . . . I was achieving a finger-picking sound, like 3 finger banjo style, but I was just using one pick – flatpicking really fast, going all over, you know. . . . that way I was able to get a loud ringing sound which was clear at the same time. Consequently, when I switched to electric, I found I had far too much strength and power in my right hand – I was making the strings jump and rattle, which led to distortion. . . . I had to learn to use a more delicate touch in conjunction with the tone and volume controls. Similarly, I had to learn from scratch with my left hand; I'd done most of my playing in open tuning, using a capo – so as well as learning up all the conventional chord structures and scales, I had to learn the whole neck. Because of this, I always maintain that I'm an electric country guitar player working in rock, rather than a rock'n'roll guitarist like, say, Clapton or Beck, who came up through blues, which was an area in which I'd had very little experience!"

"Anyway, it didn't take me all that long to pick it up because up here in my head I knew how I wanted to play. . . . I was aiming at a similar territory as James Burton. See, even though I was head over heels in love with bluegrass, I used to listen to any guitar music that I could, though at that time I had no intention or even thoughts of playing electric guitar – so I used to listen to Chuck Berry's records, and some of those Everly Bros albums, with songs like 'Ain't that loving you baby' and 'Stick with me baby' which had really great solos, and particularly some of those old Ricky Nelson tracks right from 'Stood Up' to things like 'Hello Mary Lou'. Burton was the guitarist on all those Ricky Nelson sessions and his playing was just incredible because he used to go out on the road with him too. But when Ricky Nelson stopped touring, Burton never left the studio and after a few years began to get a little stale, the same as anybody does, and he eventually decided to go back on the road again for a while. You see, in the studio it's all down to discipline; produce the nearest and tightest part, trying to be as creative as you can while still keeping to the producer's directions. . . . it's alright for a while but you need to get out now and then to re-charge and experiment and play looser. . . . and audiences tend to pull better performances after you've been cooped up in the LA studios for a few years!"

In next to no time, Clarence White became a respected studio musician and



Pat Boone, Wynn Stewart and even the Monkees. Then there were contributions to records by Gene Clark, Linda Ronstadt, the Burritos, Arlo Guthrie, the

Everly's, Randy Newman, Joe Cocker and the Byrds, of course. The list is seemingly endless, though in common with many top session men, he was very reluctant to become too specific about established groups he worked with, for fear of fingering the deficient guitarists he gossiped for.

In fact it was Cocker who first drew my attention to Clarence's brilliance; this was at the end of 1969 when he was already a Byrd but was still doing selective session work when he could fit it in. Denny Cordell, who had a name for being a perfectionist, was producing the follow up to Cocker's first album and decided to get Clarence in to embellish the Dylan song 'Dear Landlord', which wound up as the first track on the album. Joe, filling his barrel chest with a giant toke from the strongest joint I've ever seen, was almost beside himself with enthusiasm as he explained how Clarence had this strap device for altering the pitch of a string so that it sounded like a steel guitar at times. . . . "He just stood there, quite still, and listened to the track and then played this incredible solo over it, all the time tugging up and down at this thing on the shoulder strap. . . . but for some reason, probably because we were all standing around looking at him, he wasn't able to repeat it when we came to record it!"

In actual fact, though the recorded solo was unostentatious and tastefully tailored to the song (rather than protruding crudely like so much of the work of guest artists!), I don't think it came near to representing his true capabilities but it does demonstrate the use of this strap device to which Cocker refers.

Briefly (because I'll describe it fully in subsequent Byrd chapters), the device² was a modification devised principally by Gene Parsons, who'd had engineering training, with a little help from Clarence. The stud attaching the shoulder strap to the front of the body of the guitar is replaced by a lever which is connected to the 2nd string behind the bridge. When the neck of the guitar is depressed, the lever stretches the string, raising its pitch through a full tone. The invention is now marketed (Bernie Leadon has one, for instance), but Clarence was still playing the crude prototype featuring the double thickness body (see photograph) hammered together by Gene before he refined all the details in his mind. Gene tells a good story of how Clarence came down to breakfast one morning, horrified to find that Gene had been attacking his prize Fender with a hammer and chisel. (A better impression of the pedal-steel sound produced by this gadget can be found on 'Tulsa County Blue' from the 'Easy Rider' Byrds album).

Clarence had met Gene during his studio-man era; both had become involved with the Bakersfield International Label, founded by Gary Paxton, who had a long and varied pop career - he'd been Flip in Skip & Flip (Skip was Skip Battin) and then half (the other half being Kim Fowley) of the Hollywood Argyles. The business side of the label was handled by Paxton, and the studio band formed to do all the backing tracks was Clarence plus 2 ex-members of a Las Vegas type group called the Castaways - Gene Parsons and Gib Guillebeau. As well as this, they had dual roles; Clarence was going to do an instrumental album, and Gene and Gib made several singles (including a minor hit called 'Sweet Savannah from Louisiana') as Cajun Gib & Gene.

Things didn't quite work out as planned - a single by the Go-Sidin Brothers (backed by the studio group), 'Just enough to keep me hanging on', was a number 1 hit locally, but the administration of the company was haywire and efforts at national distribution were insufficient to broaden the sales field, besides which Paxton was always in and out (according to Clarence) of financial troubles - if he earned money one month, he'd blow it the next. The label folded, inevitably, and Paxton left California for Nashville whilst Clarence, Gene and Gib recruited another ex-Castaway, Wayne Moore, and became Nashville West, one of the first country-rock groups in LA, playing a circuit mainly comprising Southern Californian bars.

Nashville West lasted only a few months because in September 1968, Chris Hillman asked Clarence to join him in The Byrds (and a couple of weeks later Gene also became a Byrd, at Clarence's instigation). As you'll know (if you've been reading *Zigzag* regularly) Clarence

had already appeared on several Byrd tracks as a session man; he was on 'Girl with no name' and 'Time between' (both 'Younger Than Yesterday'), 'Wasn't born to follow and Change is now' (both 'The Notorious Byrd Brothers'), 'The Christian Life', 'One hundred years from now' and 'Blue-Canadian Rockies' (all from 'Sweetheart of the Rodeo').

When he joined, the Byrds were at their lowest ebb and it was in no small way due to Clarence's musicianship and tenacity that Roger McGuinn was able to prevent himself slithering down the slippery slope to oblivion and start the job of rebuilding the group's reputation. Since we'll be tracking their course in detail in future issues, suffice it to say that Clarence White's contribution was immense; he went on to become the second longest serving Byrd (after McGuinn), staying with them until Roger finally let it fall apart in April 1973.

The reason for their collapse, in a nutshell, was twofold; Roger was being distracted by Asylum's plans to capitalise on the 'original re-formed Byrds' idea, and producer Terry Melcher had been sowing the seeds of dissension within the then-current Byrds causing the departure of Gene Parsons and Skip Battin (more on that in due course). Clarence, however, realising that too much of Roger's interest lay in other directions, had begun to make provisions for his own future and not being contracted to CBS was able to negotiate a deal with Warner Bros.

When I last spoke to Clarence, in May of this year (when the perceptive Martin Smith of UA's Iron Horse Agency had arranged to bring in the re-formed Kentucky Colonels for a short tour), he was held below it the next. The label folded, inevitably, and Paxton left California for Nashville whilst Clarence, Gene and Gib recruited another ex-Castaway, Wayne Moore, and became Nashville West, one of the first country-rock groups in LA, playing a circuit mainly comprising Southern Californian bars.

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so long' and Tom Paxton's old classic 'Last thing on my mind', done in a semi-bluegrass style (an extension of that enveloped way back in '64) with Lee Sklar on bass, John Guerin on drums and Ry Cooder on bottleneck.

When he returned to LA, it was his intention to complete the album, having booked studio time for most of June - so presumably the final master tapes are now in the can ready for the anticipated August release date. He'd also worked with ex-Sea Trainers Richard Greene and Peter Rowan on their forthcoming Asylum album, an album by yet another ex-Boston area folkie, Billy Keith, once banjo player with Jim Kweskin's Jug Band, and he was still (at double the normal union rate too) getting far more session work than he could cope with. In addition, the temporarily resurrected Kentucky Colonels were having a whale of a time gigging in the Los Angeles area.

The day after he'd been telling me all about this unbelievable group he was bringing in for a tour this September (Skip Battin - bass, Gene Parsons - drums/Clarence White - guitar/Chris Hillman - guitar/Al Perkins - steel guitar), Martyn phoned me with the news of Clarence's death. I almost collapsed; it seemed like only the other day that he was sitting there, telling me about how he was lining one of the walls of his living room with redwood paneling... and now he's dead, leaving his wife Susie and their children, Michelle and Bradley, with whom all our sympathies lie.

In a letter to Chrissie Brewer, who used to look after The Byrds Preservation Society, Gene Parsons wrote to say that "Clarence was hit by a car and killed last Saturday night. Gib Guillebeau called at 5.00 on Sunday morning to tell us he'd

been hit but was still alive... he had extensive brain damage and they were flying in a brain surgeon. Twenty minutes later Gib called back to say he was gone. The lady driving the car was drunk and Clarence didn't have a chance - Roland tried to pull him clear and was injured too, with a dislocated arm. There isn't much to say now, except that we loved him very much and we'll miss him for the rest of our lives. For myself, I'll never be able to play music again without thinking of my friend Clarence".

The news reached England too late for the week's musical press, and it was John Peel who first relayed it, playing 'Bugler' from 'Farther Along' in his memory. It was an appropriate choice; not only was the last track he'd ever recorded with the Byrds, it was the one of which he was most proud. Apart from that track, we cut and mixed the whole album in 5 days, here in England... but I purposely messed up the vocal on 'Bugler' because I didn't want to rush it. When we got back to LA, I took the tape into the studio and did the vocal again and dubbed on a bit of mandolin too - then we, just me and the engineer, spent a long time mixing it... I really love that song, I think it's the best thing I ever did with the Byrds! 'Bugler' is the story of a boy and his dog, once sad yet beautifully graphic, but now twisted with pain: "One day Mother, she brought the news - Said 'Honey, young Bugler's done paid his dues...". He's been hit down, on that highway... Dry your eyes and stand up straight - Bugler's got a place at the pearly gates... say goodbye!".

Goodbye, Clarence my old mate.... we're really going to miss you. Pete

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9 JOE COCKER, SPIRIT, BUDDY HOLLY, SIREN, KEVIN AYERS, PETE BROWN, PAUL BUTTERFIELD

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31 JON MCLEAN, MICHAEL MURPHY, JONATHAN KELLY, JAC HOLZMAN, BYRDS PT 5, MONSTER FAMILY TREE

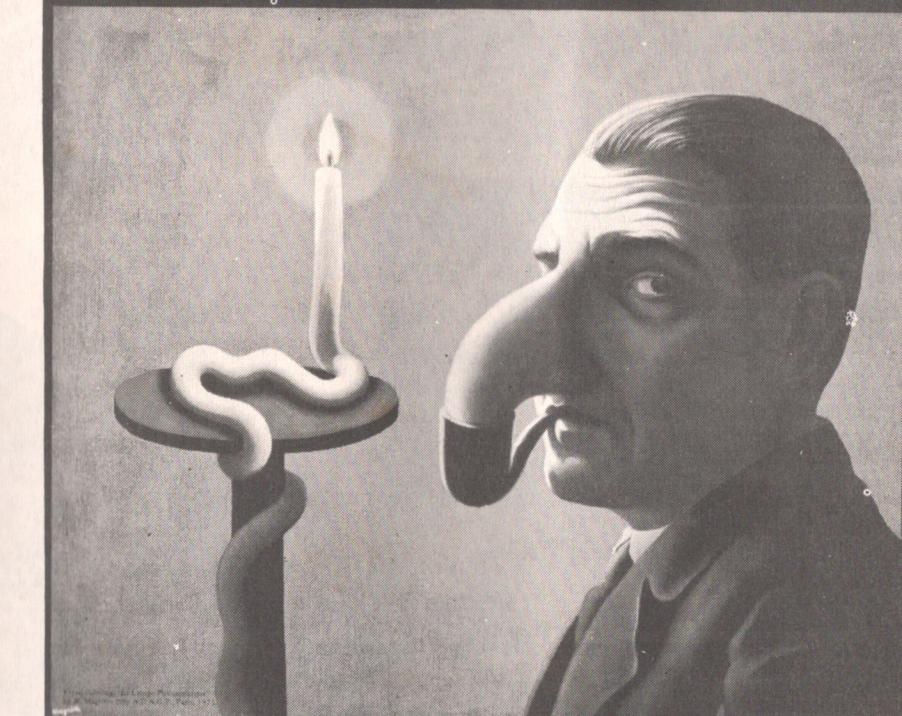
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Published by Spicebox Books, 37 Soho Square, LONDON W1
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